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Officer-man relations, morale and discipline in the British Army, 1902-22.

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**'Officer-Man Relations, Morale and Discipline in the British Army,
1902-22'**

by

Gary David Sheffield

**Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
King's College, London
1994**

- i -



Abstract

In Chapters 1 and 2, it is argued that inter-rank relations in the Regular army of 1902-14 were characterised by paternalism, deference, discipline, formality and mutual respect. Relations in the auxiliary forces were more relaxed. Officers' attitudes towards their men evolved in this period, influenced by a lively debate on discipline.

In Chapter 3, the British army's attitude to morale, and the morale of the British Expeditionary Force, which remained remarkably resilient, is considered.

Chapters 4 and 5 examine the wartime officer corps: its social composition, methods of selecting and training officers, and influences on concepts of officership. It is argued that officers drawn from non-traditional sources were inculcated with the 'public school' ethos of the Regular officer.

In Chapter 6 the disciplinary regime of the wartime army, which generally followed the pattern of the Regular army, is examined and placed into the context of Edwardian society. It is argued that factors such as paternalism and deference alleviated harsh discipline and some wartime units operated an 'auxiliary' style of discipline.

In Chapter 7 the inter-rank relationship is analysed from the perspective of the officer. Particular attention is paid to the affection felt by many officers for their men, and the institutionalising of paternalism.

Chapter 8 examines the rankers' view of the relationship. It concludes that they tended to judge officers on their individual merits, but the concept of a 'comradeship of the trenches' remains valid.

Chapter 9 ties together many of the threads of the argument by concluding that the officer-man relationship played a crucial role in maintaining British military morale in the First World War. Comparisons are offered with the wartime French army and Dominion contingents, and the postwar British army.

Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract	ii
Contents	iii
Abbreviations	iv
Introduction	ix
Chapter 1: <u>Officer-Man Relations in the British Army, 1902-14</u>	1
Chapter 2: <u>Officer-Man Relations in the British Army, 1902-14 (continued)</u>	24
Chapter 3: <u>The British Army and Morale in the Era of the Great War</u>	63
Chapter 4: <u>The British Officer Corps, 1914-1918</u>	96
Chapter 5: <u>British Military Leadership 1914-1918: Influences and Training</u>	116
Chapter 6: <u>Officer-Man Relations: the Disciplinary and Social Context</u>	151
Chapter 7: <u>Officer-Man Relations: The Officer's Perspective</u>	181
Chapter 8: <u>Officer-Man Relations: The Ranker's Perspective</u>	220
Chapter 9: <u>Officer-Man Relations, Morale and Discipline</u>	268
Conclusion	334
Appendix 1: <u>British Army Conscripts</u>	337
Appendix 2: <u>Discipline and Continuity in Small Units</u>	340
Appendix 3: <u>Published Guides to Officership</u>	343
Sources and Bibliography	347

List of Tables

Table 1	Officers serving in the British army at the beginning and end of the Great War	100
Table 2	Principal occupations of officers demobilised, 11 November 1918 to 12 May 1920, as expressed as a percentage of those returns analysed	100

Abbreviations used in text and footnotes

2/Lt.	Second Lieutenant
AA and QMG	Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster General
AAG	Assistant Adjutant-General
Adj.Gen.	Adjutant General
AIF	Australian Imperial Force
AOC	Army Ordnance Corps
ANZAC, Anzac	Australian and New Zealand Army Corps
AP & SS	Army Printing and Stationary Services
APM	Assistant Provost Marshal
Appx.	Appendix
A and Q	Adjutant-General's and Quartermaster General's Branches
AO	Army Order
<u>AQ</u>	<u>Army Quarterly</u>
Argylls	Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders
<u>AR</u>	<u>Army Review</u>
AROs	Army Routine Orders
ASC	Army Service Corps
Aus.	Australian
<u>BAR</u>	<u>British Army Review</u>
BCMh	British Commission for Military History
Bde.	Brigade
Beds.	Bedfordshire
BEF	British Expeditionary Force
Berks.	Berkshire
<u>BJS</u>	<u>British Journal of Sociology</u>
<u>Blackwood's</u>	<u>Blackwood's Magazine</u>
BLPES	British Library of Political and Economic Science
Brig.Gen.	Brigadier-General
BSM	Battery Sergeant Major
Bucks.	Buckinghamshire
Bufs	Bufs (East Kent Regiment)
BW	Black Watch
Cameron's	Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders
Can.	Canadian
Capt.	Captain
CEF	Canadian Expeditionary Force
CIGS	Chief of the Imperial General Staff
<u>CJ</u>	<u>Cavalry Journal</u>
<u>CJH</u>	<u>Canadian Journal of History</u>
CMP	Corps of Military Police
Cpl.	Corporal
CO	Commanding Officer
Col.	Colonel
Coldm. Gds.	Coldstream Guards
Coy.	Company
CSM	Company Sergeant Major
DAC	Divisional Ammunition Column
DCLI	Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry
DERR	Duke of Edinburgh's Royal Regiment
Div.	Division
DLI	Durham Light Infantry

DPM	Deputy Provost Marshal
DSO	Distinguished Service Order
Dvr.	Driver
DWR	Duke of Wellington's Regiment
ed.	editor, edited
edn.	edition
<u>EHR</u>	<u>English Historical Review</u>
<u>EKY</u>	<u>East Kent Yeoman</u>
E. Lancs.	East Lancashire
E. Lothian	East Lothian
ERM	Essex Regiment Museum
E. Surreys	East Surrey Regiment
E. Yorks.	East Yorkshire Regiment
FGCM	Field General Court Martial
<u>FH</u>	<u>French History</u>
FO	Foreign Office
FSR	Field Service Regulations
Gds.	Guards
Gen.	General
GHQ	General Headquarters
Gloucesters	Gloucestershire Regiment
GOC	General Officer Commanding
Gordons	Gordon Highlanders
Gnr.	Gunner
Gren. Gds.	Grenadier Guards
GSO	General Staff Officer
GRO	General Routine Orders
<u>GW</u>	<u>The Great War</u>
HAC	Honourable Artillery Company
Hants.	Hampshire
<u>HJ</u>	<u>Historical Journal</u>
HLI	Highland Light Infantry
HM	His Majesty's
HMSO	His Majesty's Stationary Office
IGC	Inspector General of Communications
<u>IHS</u>	<u>Irish Historical Studies</u>
IWM	Imperial War Museum
<u>JAWM</u>	<u>Journal of the Australian War Memorial</u>
<u>JCH</u>	<u>Journal of Contemporary History</u>
<u>J. Mil. Hist.</u>	<u>Journal of Military History</u>
JP	Justice of the Peace
<u>JRA</u>	<u>Journal of the Royal Artillery</u>
<u>JRAMC</u>	<u>Journal of the Royal Army Medical Corps</u>
<u>JRUSI</u>	<u>Journal of the Royal United Services Institution</u>
<u>JSAHR</u>	<u>Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research</u>
King's	King's (Liverpool) Regiment
King's Own	King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment
KOSB	King's Own Scottish Borderers
KOYLI	King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry
KRRC	King's Royal Rifle Corps
KRS Q	K.R. Simpson's Questionnaires
KS LI	King's Shropshire Light Infantry

L/Cpl.	Lance Corporal
LF	Lancashire Fusiliers
LHCMA	Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives
Lincs.	Lincolnshire
Londons	London Regiment
LOOB	Left Out Of Battle
Loyals	Loyal North Lancashire Regiment
Lt.	Lieutenant
Lt.Col.	Lieutenant-Colonel
Lt.Gen.	Lieutenant General
LRB	1/5 Londons (London Rifle Brigade)
LULLC	Leeds University Library, Liddle Collection
<u>MA</u>	<u>Military Affairs</u>
Maj.	Major
Maj.Gen.	Major General
MC	Military Cross
MEF	Mediterranean Expeditionary Force
MGC	Machine Gun Corps
MG Coy	Machine Gun Company
MP	Member of Parliament
NA	New Army (also known as Kitchener's Army)
NAM	National Army Museum
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
nd	not dated
NF	Northumberland Fusiliers
NLS (m)	National Library of Scotland (microfilm)
Northants.	Northamptonshire
Notts.	Nottinghamshire
N. Staffs.	North Staffordshire Regiment
NZ	New Zealand
NZEF	New Zealand Expeditionary Force
OBLI	Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry
OC	Officer Commanding
OCA	Old Comrades' Association
OCB	Officer Cadet Battalion
OH	Official History
OTC	Officer Training Corps
<u>P and P</u>	<u>Past and Present</u>
PP	Parliamentary Papers
PRO	Public Record Office
Pte.	Private
<u>PWYG</u>	<u>Princess of Wales' Yeomanry Gazette</u>
QMS	Quartermaster Sergeant
<u>QR</u>	<u>Quarterly Review</u>
Queen's	The Queen's (Royal West Surrey Regiment)
RA	Royal Artillery
RAMC	Royal Army Medical Corps
R. Bde.	Rifle Brigade
R. Berks.	Royal Berkshire Regiment
RDF	Royal Dublin Fusiliers

RE	Royal Engineers
RFA	Royal Field Artillery
RF	Royal Fusiliers
RFC	Royal Flying Corps
RGA	Royal Garrison Artillery
R. Glos.	Royal Gloucestershire
RHA	Royal Horse Artillery
R. Innis. Fus.	Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers
<u>RIHM</u>	<u>Revue Internationale D'Histoire Militaire</u>
R.I. Rif.	Royal Irish Rifles
RMA	Royal Military Academy
RMASA	Royal Military Academy Sandhurst Archives
RMASL	Royal Military Academy Sandhurst Library
RMC	Royal Military College
RMCR	Royal Military College Record
RMO	Regimental Medical Officer
RMPA	Royal Military Police Archives
RND	Royal Naval Division
ROs	Routine Orders
RQMS	Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant
RSM	Regimental Sergeant Major
RSF	Royal Scots Fusiliers
R. Scots	Royal Scots
R. Sussex	Royal Sussex Regiment
R. Warwicks.	Royal Warwickshire Regiment
R. Wilts.	Royal Wiltshire
RWF	Royal Welch Fusiliers
RWK	Royal West Kent Regiment
SCL	Staff College Library
Sgt.	Sergeant
SF	Sherwood Foresters
SLI	Somerset Light Infantry
SR	Scottish Rifles
<u>ST</u>	<u>Stand To!</u>
Supp.	Supplementary
TF	Territorial Force
<u>TLS</u>	<u>Times Literary Supplement</u>
<u>TMB</u>	<u>Trench Mortar Battery</u>
UK	United Kingdom
<u>USM</u>	<u>United Services Magazine</u>
vol.	volume
VB	Volunteer Battalion
VC	Victoria Cross
WD	War Diary
Wilts.	Wiltshire
WO	Warrant Officer or War Office
WOL	War Office Library
W. Yorks.	West Yorkshire Regiment
Yeo.	Yeomanry
YOC	Young Officer Companies

York and Lancs. York and Lancaster Regiment
Yorks. Yorkshire Regiment (Green Howards)

Notes:

1) Regular and New Army infantry battalions are indicated by a number, followed by an oblique, followed by the regiment, so 1/KRRC translates as the 1st Battalion, King's Royal Rifle Corps. Territorial battalions are indicated by this sequence: number, oblique, number, regiment.

2) Generally, the generic term 'private' (abbreviation: Pte.) has been used for the lowest rank of infantry and cavalry regiments, although some regiments had their own special titles (eg 'Rifleman').

Introduction

Until fairly recently, judgements on the subject of officer-man relationships in the British army in the 1902-22 period tended to be superficial and polemical. Writing in 1961, Brian Gardner, for instance, claimed that officers and men of the Edwardian army 'normally disliked, and often despised, one another'. (1) No evidence was offered to support this statement. Gardner was a member of the 'lions led by donkeys' school of the 1960s, (2) and to depict the pre-war army as a class-ridden, divided organisation suited his thesis that the Somme campaign was the consequence of British social and military failings. Other writers moved to the opposite extreme, painting a picture of pre-war regiments as happy families, devoid of inter-rank tensions, consisting of loyal, contented soldiers and paternal, benign officers. (3)

The first modern serious analysis of officer-man relationships was John Baynes' Morale (1967) in which he examined the relationship in 2/Scottish Rifles from the immediate prewar period to the aftermath of Neuve Chapelle in March 1915. (4) Subsequently, Edward M. Spiers has examined officer-man relations in the pre-war Regular army in several scholarly works, albeit briefly. (5) Work on inter-rank relationships in the Indian army of the Raj, (6) in the U.S.

(1) B. Gardner, The Big Push (London, 1961) p.5.

(2) A. Danchev, '"Bunking" and Debunking: The Controversies of the 1960s', in B. Bond (ed.) The First World War and British Military History (Oxford, 1991) pp.263-88.

(3) See for instance Maj. the Hon. J.J. Astor's introduction to R.A. Lloyd, A Trooper in the 'Tins' (London, 1938) p.6.

(4) J. Baynes, Morale (London, 1967). See also J. Baynes, 'The Officer-Other Rank Relationship in the British Army in the First World War', QR (Oct. 1966) pp. 442-452, which covers much the same ground.

(5) E.M. Spiers, The Army and Society 1815-1914 (London, 1980) pp.26-29; E.M. Spiers, 'The Regular Army in 1914', in I.F.W. Beckett and K. Simpson, A Nation in Arms (Manchester, 1985) pp.43, 55, 57; E.M. Spiers, The Late Victorian Army 1868-1902 (Manchester, 1992) pp.112-14. See also B. Farwell, For Queen and Country (London, 1981) pp.132-38.

(6) J. Greenhut, 'Sahib and Sepoy: An Inquiry into the Relationship between the British Officers and Native Soldiers of the British Indian Army', MA XLVIII, No.1, (1984) pp.15-18. See also T.A. Heathcote, The Indian Army (Newton Abbot, 1974) and P. Mason, A Matter of Honour (London, 1974).

Colored Troops of the American Civil War, and the Royal Navy of the mid-eighteenth century also provide much food for thought for the student of the British army of 1902-22.(1)

My study of a New Army battalion remains the only full-length work devoted to officer-man relations in the British army of 1914-18.(2) However, many works on the British army of the period make some reference to officer-man relations. (3) The debate has tended to focus on whether the experience of the officer differed significantly from that of the other rank, or if it is possible to speak of a common experience. Ian Beckett, for instance, stresses the considerable privileges enjoyed by officers which were denied to other ranks, while Peter Liddle regards the idea that it was impossible to bridge the 'socio-military gap' between officer and other rank as misconceived.(4)

Turning to Dominion forces, Isabella D. Losinger has produced a revisionist study of Canadian inter-rank relations in the Great War. (5) By contrast, historians of the Australian Imperial Force have tended to repeat C.E.W. Bean's views on its discipline and officer-man relations.(6) Christopher Pugsley's work on the NZEF makes some brief but interesting points about the nature of officer-man relations in New Zealand forces.(7)

(1) J.T. Glatthaar, Forged in Battle (New York, 1990); N.A.M. Rodger, The Wooden World (London, 1988 edn.)

(2) G.D. Sheffield, 'The Effect of War Service on the 22nd (Service) Battalion Royal Fusiliers (Kensington), with Special Reference to Morale, Discipline and the Officer-Man Relationship' (MA thesis, University of Leeds, 1984).

(3) See for instance K. Simpson, 'The Officers', in Beckett and Simpson, p.85; D. Winter, Death's Men (London, 1979 edn.) pp.59-62; T. Denman, 'The Catholic Irish Soldier in the First World War: the "racial environment"', IHS XXVII, No.108 (1991) pp.352-365.

(4) I.F.W. Beckett, 'The British Army, 1914-18: The Illusion of Change', in J. Turner (ed.) Britain and the First World War (London, 1988) pp.107-08; P.H. Liddle, The Soldier's War 1914-1918 (London, 1988) pp.80-81.

(5) I.D. Losinger, 'Officer-Man Relations in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1919' (MA thesis, Carleton University, 1990).

(6) C.E.W. Bean, Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918 (Sydney, 12 vols., 1921-42); B. Gammage, The Broken Years (Ringwood, Vic. 1975 edn.) pp.85-88, 230-63; but see also chapter 9 below.

(7) C. Pugsley, Gallipoli The New Zealand Story (Auckland, 1984) pp.13-14, 78, 258-60; C. Pugsley, On the Fringe of Hell (Auckland, 1991), passim.

With one exception (see below), Pugsley's On the Fringe of Hell is the only major study of British military discipline in the Great War, although Dr. Alf Peacock has published a number of short articles on the subject, concentrating particularly on field punishment.(1) Three other aspects of discipline, namely military executions, (2) military police,(3) and mutiny (4), have also received informed attention, and these works have much to tell us about the nature of the British army in the era of the Great War. The morale and discipline of the BEF has been covered by J. Brent Wilson in his excellent, although now rather dated, overview, and in recent years other valuable studies of particular aspects of morale have appeared.(5)

The lack of a major study of officer-man relations in the British army of the Great War means that a vital element is missing from our understanding of that army. My 1984 study amply confirmed Tony Ashworth's view that a military unit could become a community, a substitute family for the soldier.(6) As a wartime temporary officer wrote, 'An army, like any other human society, is an organism, whose well-being depends on the interplay of human relationships'. (7) This thesis attempts to fill the gap in the historiography of the British army of the Great War by examining this 'interplay of human relationships'.

An examination of such a broad theme is fraught with dangers. As a TF officer

- (1) A.J. Peacock, 'Crucifixion No.2' Gunfire 4, pp.211-21 is a typical example.
- (2) A. Babington, For the Sake of Example (London, 1983); J. Putkowski and J. Sykes, Shot at Dawn (Barnsley, 1989).
- (3) G.D. Sheffield, 'The Operational Role of British Military Police on the Western Front, 1914-18' in P. Griffith, (ed.) British Fighting Methods in the Great War (forthcoming).
- (4) G. Dallas and D. Gill, The Unknown Army (London, 1985); L. James, Mutiny (London, 1987); J. Putkowski, 'Toplis, Etaples & "The Monocled Mutineer"', ST 18 (1986) pp.6-11.
- (5) J.B. Wilson, 'Morale and Discipline in the British Expeditionary Force, 1914-18' (MA thesis, University of New Brunswick, 1978); J.G. Fuller, Troop Morale and Popular Culture in the British and Dominion Armies 1914-1918 (Oxford, 1991); S.P. MacKenzie, 'Morale and the Cause: The Campaign to Shape the Outlook of Soldiers of the British Expeditionary Force, 1914-18', CJH XXV (1990) pp.215-32; S.P. MacKenzie, Politics and Military Morale (Oxford, 1992) pp.3-39.
- (6) T. Ashworth, Trench Warfare 1914-1918 (London, 1980) p.8.
- (7) A.D. Thorburn, Amateur Gunners (Liverpool, 1933) p.5.

remarked, 'There were marked but perhaps subtle differences' in the inter-rank relations existing in Territorial, Regular and New Army units.(1) I would go further, to say that no two units were exactly alike. To take but one example, the ethos of 2/4 and 2/6 DWR, two Territorial battalions of the same regiment, were very different.(2) Ideally, to build up a coherent picture of officer-man relations, discipline and morale in the British army of the first two decades of the twentieth century, one would need an immense number of detailed case-studies of individual units. At an early stage in my research it was decided that, having already examined a battalion, this thesis should take the form of an overview rather than an in-depth case study, even of a larger formation such as a division. The aim of this thesis is to lay the foundations for future studies of individual units. It is to be hoped that the usefulness of such a tour d'horizon will outweigh the generalisations that will inevitably occur.

This thesis is based largely on published and unpublished writings of junior officers, NCOs and private soldiers; the latter is a hitherto under-exploited source. (3) By definition these writings reflect the opinions of individuals. How reliable are the memoirs of soldiers which were often written many years after the war? A former artillery officer wrote in 1964 that he found himself

looking at the 1914/18 war in some astonishment that the events of fifty years ago can still be so vivid in an old man's memory...it is a conscious effort to recall those World War I days. Yet when the effort is made, the name of a place, or of a soldier, will immediately bring back a lively recollection of an event, and of the circumstances that led to, and followed after, that event.(4)

It is, perhaps, not surprising that veterans of the Great War should be able to recall the most intense, exciting, traumatic and even, paradoxically, in many cases, happy period of their life with great clarity.

(1) V.F. Eberle, My Sapper Venture (London, 1973) p.102.

(2) Unpublished account, notebook IV, B.D. Parkin papers, 86/57/1, IWM.

(3) P. Simkins, 'Everyman at War: Recent Interpretations of the Front Line Experience', in Bond, The First World War p.312.

(4) Unpublished account, p.116, R.C. Foot papers, IWM.

War fiction which was based at least in part on the author's own experience has also proved very useful as a source. A novel, whatever its literary merit, even if unreliable on matters of fact could nonetheless 'describe the sensations of military service' just as effectively as a memoir. Indeed the ability of the novelist to 'recreate soldiers' conversations' increases the usefulness of fiction for the historian.(1)

Several frequently-used terms need explanation. Formally, private soldiers were referred to as 'other ranks'; informally, as 'rankers'; both terms are used here. The term 'ranker-officer' is used to describe a former other rank who received a commission, regardless of his social background. 'Regimental officers', as opposed to 'staff officers', were those who served with a unit.

When citing unpublished evidence it did not always prove possible to use conventional forms of notation. It is unclear, for example, to whom many rankers' letters were addressed. Generally, the following system has been used. Firstly, the type of evidence is mentioned (diary entry, unpublished account, letter). This is followed by the date or page number, as applicable, the collection from which the evidence is drawn, the reference number of the collection, and finally the archive. Unless otherwise stated, the individual named in the reference was the author of the letter, memoir or diary. As an individual may have held various ranks at different times, rank is omitted from the citation. However, an indication of their rank, or at least their hierarchical status at the time to which the evidence refers is generally given in the body of the text and in the bibliography.

A handful of people deserve especial thanks. These are my supervisor, Professor Brian Bond; Mr. Keith Simpson, who gave me access to his unique questionnaires on officers of the Great War; Dr. Ian Beckett; Mr. Julian

(1) H. Cecil, 'The Literary Legacy of the War: the Post-war British War Novel - a Select Bibliography' in P.H. Liddle, Home Fires and Foreign Fields (London, 1985) p.205.

Putkowski; and Mr. Peter Simkins. I would also like to thank my colleagues in the Department of War Studies, RMA Sandhurst, especially Dr. John Pimlott, Mr. Nigel de Lee, Dr. Steve Badsey, Mr. Sean McKnight, Dr. David Chandler, Dr. Duncan Anderson and Dr. Francis Toase, and in the Sandhurst Collection, Dr. Tony Heathcote and Mrs. Martine de Lee. Without the help of successive Sandhurst librarians, Mr. John Hunt and Mr. Andrew Orgill, and the librarian at Staff College, Mrs. Pam Bendell, and their staffs, this thesis could not have been written. I also would like to thank successive Directors of Studies at Sandhurst for providing the funding which enabled me to pursue this project.

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Chapter 1

Officer-Man Relations and Discipline in the British Army, 1902-14

This is the first of two chapters that will examine aspects of the officer-man relationship and discipline in the Edwardian army. To set these subjects into context, it is necessary to outline the social composition of the Regular army. The role of the NCO and the officers' perception of the inter-rank relationship will then be discussed. Finally, after an examination of the role of discipline in the Regular army, the ordinary soldier's views on the officer-man relationship will be assessed.

1.1 The Social Composition of the Regular Army, 1902-14

The popular image of 'Kipling's army' is that it was recruited from the highest and lowest social strata, and the gulf between officers and other ranks was indeed one of the widest in British society.(1) In 1944 Sir James Edmonds claimed that recruitment for the pre-1914 army had been aided by 'the compulsion of hunger'. (2) Edmonds' assertion, although unpalatable to the official mind,(3) was not far from the truth. Various estimates of the proportion of unemployed men enlisting in the army ranged from 70 per cent in one area to in excess of 90 per cent for the country as a whole. (4) Skilled and unskilled labourers accounted for 24 and 44.5 per cent respectively of men joining the army in 1913 and a further 25.5 per cent of recruits consisted of other working-class occupations such as carmen and carters, outdoor porters, and

(1) A.R. Skelly, The Victorian Army at Home (London, 1977) p.199.

(2) J.E. Edmonds, The Occupation of the Rhineland 1918-29 (London, 1987 edn.) p.168.

(3) FO comments included in Sir E. Bridges to Edmonds, 22 July 1944, CAB 45/81, PRO.

(4) A.J.A Wright, 'The Possible Effects of Compulsory Military Training on Recruiting for the Regular Army', JRUSI LV, No.406, (1911) p.1590; Spiers, 'The Regular Army', p.44.

domestic servants. Professional men/students and clerks constituted only 1 and 3 per cent respectively.(1) Thus the intake of recruits in a not untypical year were drawn almost entirely from the working classes, with labourers, rather than artisans, predominating.

Typically, the Regular soldier of the period was of urban provenance. As early as 1851, a minority of soldiers came from rural areas, reflecting the transition of Britain from a largely rural to a largely urban society.(2). The educational standards of the average soldier were low. On enlistment, recruits were graded according to their educational class. These ranged from A, 'men of good education', through to E, illiterates. In 1913, only 6 per cent were classed as A, 11 per cent were classed as E, while 58 per cent were men graded as C and D, men of moderate and inferior education.(3) When his CO in the RHA reported that W.J.Nicholson was 'well educated', Nicholson realised 'that he meant [well educated] by army standards' and was not particularly flattered.(4)

The health of the other ranks was equally unimpressive.(5) Arthur Lee MP believed that the majority of men who enlisted in London were 'poor, half-starved, unintelligent boys'. (6) The rejection on medical grounds of 40 per cent of those offering for enlistment during the Boer War had caused a great deal of national soul-searching, but little result: in 1910 52.2 per cent of recruits failed the medical.(7). Others scraped through the medical by a

(1) 'Trades of men offering for enlistment, year ending September 30th 1913', PP. 1921, XX, CMD 1193.

(2) Spiers, 'Regular Army' pp.44-45, 53; Baynes, Morale 137; Skelly, pp.289-90.

(3) PP. 1921, XX, CMD 1193.

(4) Unpublished account, p.2, W.J. Nicholson papers, 78/31/1, IWM.

(5) But see a defence of the physique of the soldier in [W.E. Cairnes] The Army From Within. By the Author of "An Absent Minded War". (London, 1901) p.65.

(6) A.H. Lee, 'The Recruiting Question: a Postscript to the Army Debate', Nineteenth Century 49, (1901) p.1058.

(7) J. Stevenson, British Society 1914-45 (Harmondsworth, 1984) p.43.

subterfuge.(1) British medical officers were resigned to recruits being 'probably underfed'. (2) In short, the British army of the Edwardian era was largely composed of ill-educated men of indifferent health, from poor, urban backgrounds.

The officer class was largely recruited, as it had been in the nineteenth century, from what has been described as 'traditional sources of supply': families with military connections; the gentry and peerage; and to some degree, the professions and clergy. (3) British officers did not form a distinct caste. Men of families from outside the traditional sources of supply of officers, from parvenu families who had become landowners, or from 'trade', were also commissioned.(4) The ethos of the officer class remained that of the landed interest, however. There are several reasons for this. The military leadership was overwhelmingly rural in background. (5) Thus even 'middle-class' officers were usually of rural rather than urban/industrial provenance, and therefore likely to be influenced by the traditions of the landed, rather than the commercial, classes. Moreover, for a son to be commissioned into a smart regiment was tangible evidence of the social arrival of a family, and the son would be keen to conform and to be accepted as an officer and a gentlemen. To deviate from acceptable codes of behaviour was to risk ostracism or worse. As a contemporary writer observed, those who worried about the commissioning of officers who had 'nothing to recommend them but the riches which their parents had acquired in trade' could rest assured: 'We can safely leave these young

(1) Unpublished account, p.3, H.J. Coombes papers, PP/MCR/119, IWM.

(2) J.A. Balck, 'Recruiting in the German Army', JRAMC XV (1910) pp.567, 571-72. See also J.M. Winter, The Great War and the British People (London, 1987 edn.) p.7.

(3) Spiers, 'Regular Army', p.39; P.E. Razzell, 'The social origins of British Officers in the Indian and British Home Army', BJS 14, No.3 (1963) pp.249-53.

(4) G. Harries-Jenkins, The Army in Victorian Society (London, 1977) pp.24-25.

(5) Spiers, Army and Society p.11.

men to the tender mercies of their brother officers'.(1) Unfortunates deemed 'unsuitable' by their peers would be hounded out of the army, sometimes being subjected to a mock court martial.(2)

The British officer class was educationally homogenous. An education at a public school, especially a Clarendon school, was an almost essential rite of passage for the aspirant officer.(3) By 1913, the majority of officers also passed through Sandhurst or Woolwich.(4) The common educational background of the majority of the officer class also helped to ensure that 'country house' values permeated the officers' mess. (These values, and the effect they had on officer-man relations, are discussed below).

In 1899 a 'genuine' ranker, as opposed to a gentleman-ranker, was described as a man who joins the army 'without money or scrip, without influential or sympathetic friends'.(5) In earlier times, the commissioning of such men had been relatively common, particularly in wartime, but by 1913 only about 2 per cent of Regular officers were commissioned from the ranks each year. In addition there were a number of ex-ranker quartermasters and riding masters, but these were 'dead-end' promotions given to senior NCOs and WOs nearing the end of their careers.(6) Soldiers who might have contemplated taking a commission were deterred by the low rates of pay. (7) Although ranker-officers were not

(1) [W.E. Cairnes] 'A British Officer', Social Life in the British Army (London, 1900) pp.xviii-xix.

(2) See N. Newham-Davis, Military Dialogues (London, nd) pp.30-37; Cairnes, Social Life pp. XVIII, 61.

(3) Simpson, 'The Officers', p.65; Harries-Jenkins, p.96; Spiers, 'Regular Army' p.54; Baynes, Morale p.29.

(4) Simpson, 'The Officers' pp.64-65.

(5) Quoted in C. Dalton, 'Commissions for the British Ranks', JRUSI XLIV, No.2 (1900) p.167.

(6) Dalton, pp.167-176; R. Hargreaves, 'Promotion from the Ranks', AQ LXXXVI, (1963) pp.200-210; Simpson, 'The Officers' p.65; H. Strachan, Wellington's Legacy: The Reform of the British army 1830-54 (Manchester, 1984) pp.98-99.

(7) '6197/R.G.A. (S.W.)', 'The Ranker Officer', JRUSI LXIII, No.451 (1918) p.2.

necessarily treated unkindly,(1) the privations endured by impecunious officers ensured that the impact of the ex-ranker on the prewar British officer class was a minor one.

It should be remembered that the British army was a collection of individual regiments and corps, each fiercely independent, with its own traditions and customs. There was an unofficial 'league table' of exclusivity with some regiments demanding a large private income of their officers. Indeed, by 1912 there was a shortage of officers in the cavalry of the line, and the War Office was forced to ask that Sandhurst cadets be acquainted with the fact that it was possible in some regiments to survive on an income of £300-400.(2) In spite of these qualifications, the British officer class shared common values, and can be treated as a body which shared what has been described as a 'collective mentality'. (3)

1.2 Relations between NCOs and Other Ranks in the Regular Army, 1902-14

Modern scholarship has thus confirmed the essential accuracy of J.F.C Fuller's view of the army of the period, that 'Recruited from the bottom of Society, it was led from the top'.(4) The inter-rank relationship was, however, rather more subtle than traditional views, discussed in the Introduction above, would allow. The structure of the army was rigidly hierarchical, but there was scope for informal relations. However, the relationship of the officer to the soldier can be properly understood only if the position of the NCO, who played a key role in the enforcement of discipline, is first examined.

(1) D.M. Henderson, Highland Soldier (Edinburgh, 1989) pp.113, 126. For the problems of ranker-officers, see W.R. Robertson, From Private to Field Marshal (London, 1921) pp.29-31; V. Bonham-Carter, Soldier True (London, 1963) pp.29-31.
(2) Cairnes, Army from Within p.197; Baynes, pp.29-30; letter, 8 May 1912, RMC Register of Letters File index 1910-12, 4843, RMASA.

(3) E.A. Muenger, 'The British Army in Ireland, 1886-1914' (Ph D. thesis, University of Michigan, 1981) p.93.

(4) J.F.C. Fuller, The Army in My Time, (London, 1935) p.6.

Sergeants were the non-commissioned equivalents of the section officer, wrote an observer in 1914,

But of far more actual importance,...since parades frequently take place in the absence of the troop or section officer, while the troop or section sergeant is at all times responsible for the efficiency of his men.(1)

The NCO stood between the private and the officer much as the pre-Reformation priest stood between man and God. If a private wished to speak to an officer, an NCO had to be present throughout the conversation.(2) The NCO might have been on friendly terms with his men before his promotion, but once he had gained a stripe, all social contact between them had to cease. Sergeants had their own mess and billets, to 'emphasise their separateness from the rank and file' and to improve discipline, but the unfortunate lance-corporal had to sleep in the same room and share the same meals as his section.(3) A prewar NCO stated that the newly promoted lance-corporal 'can be the most unhappiest man in the army. He is immediately isolated from his old companions, and his new friends jealously watch him for faults'.(4) This policy of segregation seems to have been effective. In the army of the 1870s it was said that 'The sergeant might belong to a different race', and an NCO could be arrested for calling a private by his Christian name. Similarly, forty or so years later, a corporal of 2/R. Bde. was reprimanded for overfamiliarity with the men. (5) In the 2/Cheshires this segregation was taken one stage further; corporals were not allowed to mix with lance-corporals, although this does not seem to have been a general

(1) E.C. Vivian, The British Army From Within (London, 1914) p.52. See also R. Blatchford, My Life in the Army (London, 1910) pp.177-78.

(2) F. Richards, Old Soldier Sahib (London, 1965 edn.) pp.155-56.

(3) Vivian, p.54.

(4) J. Lucy, There's A Devil in the Drum (London, 1938) p.63.

(5) Blatchford p.177, 181; unpublished account, p.20, J.W. Riddell papers, 77/73/1, IWM.

practice in other regiments.(1) An exception to this general rule of segregation, if a ranker's memoirs are to be believed, occurred in 19th Hussars.

(2) A natural result of the segregation of junior NCOs from the men was that many men were reluctant to become lance-corporals.

However, relations between NCOs and privates varied from unit to unit. In 2/R. Bde. NCOs were generally detested by privates. An NCO of this unit felt that the army would have been more efficient if a closer relationship could have developed between NCOs and men, allowing men to feel that they could go to their sergeants for advice and help. Instead,

The whole trouble about the pre-war army was fear, Privates for Cpls & Cpls for Sgts (sic) and so on. There was no trust among the troops, and as a result it was impossible to get the best out of the men, although they were excellent...(3)

Although this evidence has been used to imply that this situation was common to the whole army, (4) NCO-man relations seem to have been unusually poor in 2/R. Bde. By contrast, a ranker's account of life in the 20th Hussars mentions one NCO who abused his authority, but does not give the impression that the privates lived in 'fear' of their superiors.(5) Indeed, some young soldiers admired their NCOs. (6)

The role of the NCO was not merely that of coercion. He also looked after the welfare of his men and to some extent played the role of a father figure, but most of all he was the vital link between commissioned officers and other ranks. Inevitably, since the smooth running of the unit was largely dependent

(1) J. Hawke, From Private to Major (London, 1938) p.83.

(2) F.H. Maitland, Hussar of the Line (London, 1951) p.21.

(3) Unpublished account, pp.10,12,21, 44, J.W. Riddell papers, 77/73/1, IWM.

(4) V.G. Kiernan, European Empires from Conquest to Collapse 1815-1960 (London, 1982) p.137.

(5) Unpublished account, p.16, R. Garrod papers, IWM.

(6) Unpublished account, p.8, H.J. Coombes papers, IWM.

on cooperation between officers and NCOs, relations were less distant, although far from intimate. (1) (Wartime officer-NCO relations are considered in more detail in a later chapter).

1.3 Officer-Man Relations in the Regular Army, 1902-14

Officer-man relations followed the pattern of the ideal 'country house' relationship between the landlord and tenant, with loyalty and deference being given in exchange for paternalism and leadership. The concept of deference is discussed in a later chapter, but here an analysis of paternalism is appropriate. Paternalism was a set of widely held social attitudes rather than a coherent social theory. It has been argued that paternalists of the Victorian era believed that society 'should be authoritarian, hierarchic, organic, and pluralistic.' A belief in a society which was hierachical was a central pillar of the paternalist's Weltanschauung. Without inequality of wealth and property, the poor would lack incentive to work, and the affluent would not possess 'the wherewithal... to rule, develop the arts of government and do charitable work'. Society was organic, in that every individual had his place, his responsibilities, 'his reciprocal obligations, and his strong ties of dependency'. Finally, society consisted of a number of different hierarchies, each contained within the greater hierarchy. (2)

The core of the paternalist's creed was noblesse oblige, the belief that privilege entailed responsibility. The responsibilities of the paternalist can

(1) H. Wyndham, The Queen's Service London, 1899) p.151; H. Wyndham, 'Officers and Men', USM XXI, No.882, (1902) pp.184-5.

(2) D. Roberts, Paternalism in Early Victorian England (London, 1979) pp.2-6.

be summarised under the headings of ruling, guiding, and helping. The first two involved keeping order, punishing anyone who posed a threat to the stability of society, and preventing turmoil through spiritual, moral, and political guidance of those in the lower reaches of the hierarchy. The third consisted of helping the poor, whether it was by building cheap housing or dispensing food in time of want. Roberts' conclusions are broadly applicable to the Edwardian period. By the early twentieth century, paternal owners of industrial factories accepted that they had to provide continuous work, good conditions and materials. Such men were perceived by their workforce as being 'fair'.(1)

The attitudes of the Edwardian officer reflected these concepts of paternalism. In the wake of the Curragh Incident in 1914 a retired Guards officer, Lord St Audries, made a classic statement about the nature of discipline and the officer-man relationship in the British army:

Discipline...is not kept up by fear of punishment, by threats, or by bullying. Discipline is kept, partly no doubt by training, but a great deal more by tradition, by esprit de corps, by the confidence, respect, yes and the affection which exists between officers and men...(2)

St Audries's belief that the regiment formed a community, in which officers and men were bound together in friendly common interest was widely held by Regular officers.(3) Another common belief was that other ranks preferred to be led by gentlemen.(4)

The officer's concept of inter-rank relations had evolved over the years.

(1) P. Joyce, Work, Society and Politics (London, 1980) p.99. For one industrialist as a paternalist, see K. Grievess, Sir Eric Geddes (Manchester, 1989) pp.129-31.

(2) Hansard, 1st Series, Lords, XV, (30 Mar. 1914), col. 795.

(3) See N. Nicholson, Alex (London, 1973) p.26; W.N. Nicholson, Behind the Lines (London, 1939) p.105.

(4) A.W. Taylor, How to Organise and Administer a Battalion (London, 1915) pp.9-10.

As Edward M. Spiers has argued, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards officers' attitudes to their men gradually changed. This reflected the evolution of the social philosophy of the landed interest during this period. The image of the port-sodden rake of the Regency period was replaced by that of the Christian gentleman, a model of sobriety and propriety. In part, pragmatism accounted for this change in officer-man relations. Some senior officers believed that recruiting would suffer unless a more enlightened regime was instituted. (1) One subaltern in the R. Warwicks had a more immediate application for his practical paternalism:

[After a route march] we inspected all the men's feet to see that they haven't any blisters etc...if you left a man alone he would never wash his feet, but it is most important, as if your men can't march, they are of no use.(2)

A similar message emerges from a book by Maj. Gen. E.A.H. Alderson, in which two pictures are displayed side by side. One depicts a man standing beside a horse, asking the groom "Well, Jim, has he fed all right?" The second shows a group of soldiers seated around a fire. An officer is asking them "Dinners all right, men?" Underneath both pictures appears the words 'Noblesse Oblige'. The original water-colours have, since the 1920s, hung in the officers' mess at Sandhurst. Taken in isolation, these pictures would suggest that Alderson had a severely pragmatic view, that men, like horses, must be cared for if they are to be useful. However, it is clear from the text and the use of the words noblesse oblige that Alderson is arguing that pragmatism is not the only motive. Rather, it was every officer's duty to attend to the needs of his men. (3)

(1) Spiers, Army and Society pp.26-29.

(2) N. Hamilton, Monty - The Making of a General (London, 1981) p.72. See also the comments of a contemporary of Montgomery's: B. Horrocks, Corps Commander (London, 1977) p.154.

(3) E.A.H. Alderson, Pink and Scarlet, or Hunting as a School for Soldiering (London, 1913) pp.198-99. See also E.A.H. Alderson, Lessons from 100 Notes Made in Peace and War (Aldershot, 1908) pp.28, 89.

Philanthropy was as at least as important as pragmatism in the re-fashioning of officers' attitudes. Noblesse oblige was not a concept that was new to the army. In the eighteenth and earlier nineteenth centuries many officers had built up good relationships with their men, taking a close interest in their welfare.(1) What was new was that by Edwardian times the officer class had, almost without exception, accepted the notion that privilege entailed responsibility. In the 1870s, such responsibilities were not so widely accepted; 'Old Paddy', the CO of a Fusilier battalion, was renowned for his paternalism, and was 'loved' by the men 'like a father'. They were less enthusiastic about some of the other officers, one of whom, an eighteen-year-old subaltern, 'used to talk to the men as if they had been dogs'.(2) Thirty or forty years later, such behaviour on the part of a subaltern would have been considered unofficerlike. When a subaltern joined 2/Argylls in 1908, his company commander impressed on him that he had to 'get to know the character and personal problems of each soldier' in his half company.(3) Similarly, upon joining 4/R. Bde. eight years earlier, a young officer was taken aside by a senior colleague and told that '[your] first and most important duty is the care and welfare of the men under your command'.(4)

Another set of assumptions, implicit in the whole concept of paternalism, also contributed to the officer's view of the relationship. The men were regarded in much the same way as children: unless their behaviour was carefully regulated, the men would misbehave, and when they misbehaved, they needed to be punished. Their lives needed to be closely supervised, for left to their own devices, they were untrustworthy. An officer of the Leinsters wrote of the

(1) S. Conway, 'To Subdue America: British Army Officers and the Conduct of the Revolutionary War', William and Mary Quarterly XLII, (1986) p.388; Strachan, Wellington's Legacy pp.109-110.

(2) Blatchford, My Life pp.205-8.

(3) H.J.D. Clark, KRS Q.

(4) A. Bryant, Jackets of Green (London, 1972) pp. 168-9.

'naivete, almost of childishness' of his men. (1) It was not only Irish soldiers who were regarded in this light, (2) and this curious mixture of respect and mistrust formed the basis of the average Regular officer's attitude towards the other ranks, and this was reflected in the disciplinary system. Officers' opportunities for contact with their men in peacetime were limited by the factors already discussed and the fact that they enjoyed long periods of leave, from four to six months a year. (3) Could there, then, be any commonality of experience in the peacetime army? In the sense that officers were not exempt from the disciplinary process, there was. Officers could be disciplined for misbehaviour and pressurised to conform by their peers. Officers of the 2/Essex were

enjoined to set an example to those whom they are placed in authority by preserving at all times a gentlemanly bearing, both in language and demeanour.(4)

More importantly, young officers were given a taste, albeit brief, of life at the bottom of the military hierarchy. It has been argued that Sandhurst cadets were given only a limited amount of instruction in the tasks of the ordinary soldier, in contrast to cadets at West Point and Kingston where the cadet 'carried out all the functions' of an NCO. (5) In fact the system of cadet government used at Sandhurst meant that at least some Gentlemen Cadets took on the responsibilities of NCOs, which included a number of unpleasant and tedious tasks. (6) Sandhurst was a hierarchical society, with junior cadets in much the same position as privates in a battalion. Until 1913, cadet under-officers and

(1) T.W. Metcalfe, Memorials of the Military Life (London, 1936) p.121.

(2) G. MacMunn, Behind the Scenes in Many Wars (1930) p.7.

(3) Cairnes, Social Life p.26.

(4) Standing Orders of the 2nd Battalion Essex Regiment (Pompadors) (Aldershot, 1903) p.13.

(5) Harries-Jenkins, p.148. See also G. J De Groot, The Pre-war Life and Career of Douglas Haig (Ph.D thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1983) p.71.

(6) RMCR, 1, (1912), p.9; Diary, K.A. Garratt papers, especially 25, 30 Nov. 1913, 76-251 (i), RMASA.

NCOs could award punishments to fellow cadets. (1) This situation, and the inevitable bullying (2) was, of course, not dissimilar to life in public schools.

Virtually all Regular officers shared one experience in common with rankers. One former cadet commented that

the Sandhurst man ...has in some respects to undergo what the private soldier undergoes...by day he is the simple recruit, hectorred and crimed for the slightest fault, savagely drilled...in all ways harshly and meticulously schooled.

This man considered this to be an advantage, although it was not appreciated as such at the time.(3) Cadets were not taught to be leaders: one man recalled that he had ^{learned} little about 'man management' at Sandhurst, while another recalled that it had the reputation of 'turning out a very good private soldier'. (4)

Once they reached their regiments, newly commissioned subalterns had to 'pass off the square' - that is, undergo training in drill under a senior NCO alongside private soldiers. Highland subalterns had to undergo the even greater ordeal of passing off the square in Highland dancing.(5) A young officer would find himself '"less than dust...learn[ing] his drill as an ordinary "rooky"'.(6) Indeed, in the course of the three months that J.A. Halstead (1/Loyals) spent on the square, he felt that he 'learned something of the private soldier'.(7) A TF officer recalled the humiliation of making blunders in front of social inferiors, but thought it an important stage in gaining the respect of his men.(8)

The extent to which the young officer became familiar with the lot of the

(1) Letter, 16 January 1913, WO/152/1913/5108, RMA SA.

(2) Montgomery of Alamein, Memoirs (London, 1960 edn.) p.20.

(3) Metcalfe, p.48.

(4) H.D. Thwaytes, W.J. Jervois, KRS Q; for Woolwich, see unpublished account, p.7, L.A. Hawes papers, 87/41/1, IWM.

(5) H.J.D. Clarke, KRS Q.

(6) W. Childs, Episodes and Reflections (London, 1930) p.15.

(7) J.A. Halstead, KRS Q.

(8) C. Kernahan, An Author in the Territorials (London, 1908) pp.17-23, 45-46.

ranker should not be exaggerated. The experience was of relatively short duration, and led directly to a privileged lifestyle. But it did give officers a glimpse into the life of the rank and file, and ensured that they had first hand experience of the methods favoured by the army for instilling discipline.(1)

The use of small mobile columns by the British during the Boer War seems to have brought about a diminution in differences between the ranks. Officers and men shared the hardships of campaigning and leadership became less a matter of 'the formal dictates of rank', and came to rely more on the 'informal, personal qualities of individual officers'.(2) Certainly, some senior officers were perturbed by the decline of formal discipline which was tacitly condoned or actively encouraged by regimental officers.(3) Some officers would have carried into the peacetime army some first-hand experience of the life of the ranker on campaign.

Some officers certainly believed that they enjoyed close relationships with their men. A subaltern wrote of the family atmosphere in the 16th Lancers. At 'stables' an 'opportunity was provided for the most intimate relationship to be established between officer and men'. Privates discussed their affairs with their officer, while old soldiers would give 'friendly warnings' to inexperienced subalterns, without 'the least impairment' of discipline. (4) It remains to be seen to how far other ranks shared this rosy view of officer-man relations.

(1) Similiar comments about the value of training at RMA Sandhurst in the 1980s were made by my JCSC 10/1 class of junior captains in May 1989.

(2) W. Nasson, 'Tommy Atkins in South Africa' in P. Warwick, (ed.) The South African War (London, 1980) pp.127-28.

(3) 'Notes by Col. J.M. Grierson RA on return from South Africa', pp.75-77, WO 108/184, PRO; Report on Office of Provost Marshal, Pretoria, 15 July 1900, WO 108/259, PRO.

(4) O. Mosley, My Life (London, 1968) pp.47-48.

1.4 Discipline in the Regular Army, 1902-14

The ranker's view of the officer-man relationship was coloured by his experience of military discipline. The nature and purpose of discipline and the training of recruits will be considered at greater length in a later chapter, but here it will suffice to quote one prewar ranker's view that the intention was 'to destroy all vestige of individualism in us and to remould the messy remains into an unshaken loyalty and devotion to the regiment'. (1) Formal discipline was reinforced by the informal hierarchy of the barrack room. Although sometimes a recruit came under the protection of an 'old soldier', a recruit could have a difficult time in barracks as experienced men exerted their unofficial but real authority. (2) Other recruits were not overly worried by discipline, (3) possibly, it will be suggested, because they were prepared for the rigors of army life by their experience as a civilian.

For the soldier^{who} had ceased to be a recruit, discipline in the peacetime Edwardian army was irksome rather than savage, except for those who chose to fight the system. As a ex-NCO of 21st Hussars learned from bitter experience, military law was based on the principle of 'Heads I win, tails you lose'. (4) The ordinary soldier was governed by rules and regulations which reflected the officers' view of the men as bovine. The standing orders of the Irish Guards (a regiment which, as will be shown, had an enlightened attitude to officer-man relations) presupposed rankers lacked the most basic standards of cleanliness, thrift and honesty. (5) While there was some merit in this approach, given

(1) J.F. Lucy, There's a Devil in the Drum (London, 1938) p.57. See also the comments of J. Espiner, quoted in P.F. Stewart, The History of the XII Lancers (Prince of Wales) (London, 1951) p.227.

(2) Lloyd, pp.13, 17; unpublished account, p.4, J.W. Riddell papers, 77/73/1, IWM.

(3) Unpublished account, pp.1-2, F.M. Packham papers, P.316, IWM.

(4) R. Edmondson, John Bull's Army From Within (London, 1907) p.16.

(5) Regimental Standing Orders of His Majesty's Irish Regiment of Footguards (London, 1911).

the impoverished background of many soldiers, the army treated the NCOs of the Corps of Military Police (CMP) in much the same way. Yet CMP NCOs were very different from the average private, having vastly more individual responsibility, and being characterised by a high level of self-discipline.(1)

Although attention to correct dress was a fundamental tenet of discipline, with NCOs as well as privates liable to be crimed for being 'improperly dressed', the situation did vary slightly from regiment to regiment. One Life Guardsman was convinced that the Footguards were engaged in 'manufacturing crime' by deliberately looking for minor faults in dress. (2) Even if an individual commanding officer was prepared to take a relaxed attitude towards dress, the army as a whole was not. One of the major reasons for the unpopularity of the CMP was that they had to check the dress of soldiers who were walking out. The importance that was attached to this can be gauged by the issue, in May 1914, of passes to Territorials temporarily stationed in Aldershot which stated that they were entitled to walk out in service dress.(3)

1.5 The Rankers' Perspective

Some rankers recognised and resented the basic premise that underpinned military discipline. Pte. Grainger (9th Lancers) confided in his diary that as a soldier 'I did not belong to myself...I am only a small nut in the Great Indian War Machine... I am a number, still retaining my name, but that being of secondary importance'. A man such as this was atypical, not only because he was

(1) See Orders of CMP, 8 May to 9 Oct 1914, Acn.680, RMPA.

(2) Lloyd, pp.48-49.

(3) Orders of CMP, 12 May 1914, Acc. 680, RMPA.

articulate and resented the disciplinary system, but also because conditions varied from unit to unit. Grainger, for instance, seems to have been generally disgruntled with his lot, and believed that the 9th Lancers placed more emphasis on 'bull' than some other regiments.(1)

Other, no less articulate men did not object to the disciplinary system. Nicholson of the RHA wrote that the Regular soldiers were 'properly, though (sic) not harshly, disciplined'.(2) Hawke of 2/Cheshires believed that strict discipline 'did not deaden the intellect' and discipline allowed the BEF to survive in 1914.(3) Deference aside, there were good reasons why men were prepared to accept the system without complaint.

It has been suggested that prewar Regular battalions offered 'a nexus of relationships, familiar faces and existing loyalties'.(4) The peacetime army offered some men a more comfortable and fulfilling existence than civilian life. They were relieved of many of the worries of everyday life. Army food, monotonous and inadequate that it might have been, at least was served regularly, which had novelty value for some recruits.(5) There were other benefits, ranging from the issuing of good, waterproof boots, to the provision of facilities and time for leisure, whereas many working-class recruits would have had little time or money for leisure. (6) When stationed in India, the private could live well; servants could be hired to shave him in bed, and

(1) Diary, 6, 9 Apr. 1903, T. Grainger papers, 7104-31, NAM.

(2) Unpublished account, p.17, W.J. Nicholson papers, p.17.

(3) Hawke, p.63.

(4) P. Kennedy, 'Britain in the First World War' in A.R. Millett and W. Murray (eds.) Military Effectiveness (London, 1988) I, p. 67.

(5) Stewart, XII Lancers p.227.

(6) Maitland, p.52-3 H. Meyers, interview; H. Bolitho, The Galloping Third (London, 1963) p.190.

to carry out his fatigues. A more subtle benefit was that the meanest British soldier exercised real power over Indians.(1)

For every disgruntled soldier like Pte. Grainger, it is likely that there were several more like H.J. Coombes (RWK), who enjoyed the outdoor life of the army, which gave him 'a feeling of well being and fitness' or T.A. Silver (E. Surreys) for whom the red uniform brought a sense of self-esteem. (2) Probably even more common was the soldier who sought a quiet life by avoiding trouble. Riddell believed that after passing through the recruit stage, army life was tough for dirty, dim or unathletic soldiers, but was easy and tolerable provided one was proficient at 'spit and polish', possessed the Third Class Educational Certificate, or was a good sportsman. (3) The prospect of a comfortable and trouble-free existence was a powerful inducement for men to internalise discipline and to conform.

A number of officers, from George V downwards, were alarmed at the implications of the Curragh Incident for military discipline.(4) While it might be true that working-class rankers had little sense of class solidarity, (5) for officers to defy authority was to set a dangerous precedent. As one subaltern commented:

how are you to preserve discipline after this, how are you to use your Army to keep law and order against strikers when once (sic) the officers have successfully resisted an attempt to use them to enforce a law which they do not approve? (6)

(1) F. Richards, Old Soldier Sahib (London, 1965 edn.) p.75, 82; Heathcote, Indian Army p.166; letter, 26 Dec. [1912?], F. Williams papers, 80/23/1, IWM.

(2) Unpublished account, pp.2, 11, H.J. Coombes papers, PP/MCR/119, IWM; unpublished account, p.2, T.A. Silver papers, 74/108/1, IWM.

(3) Unpublished account, p.43, J.W. Riddell papers, 77/73/1, IWM.

(4) I.F.W. Beckett, (ed.) The Army and the Curragh Incident, 1914 (London, 1986) p.6.; R. Jenkins, Asquith (London, 1967 edn.) p.318.

(5) Beckett, Curragh Incident p.124.

(6) Letter, 23 Mar. 1914, A.P. Wavell, in Ibid p.282.

Day-to-day discipline could have been undermined, or worse, rankers, who did not have the option of sending in their papers, could have been forced to choose between obeying their officers and obeying the government. The men would have probably refused to march against Ulster,(1) although one source claimed 'hundreds' of men were prepared to come 'out from the ranks' if given a lead by the Labour Party.(2) At the very least discipline would have been placed under severe strain. In the words of Capt. F.A. Forster (4/RF) the men would follow their officers, but 'It's all very unfortunate & terribly bad for discipline'.(3)

Paternalism can be seen as 'petty and heavy handed interference in the private lives of vulnerable people'.(4) Did the rank and file see their relationship with their officers in these terms? Certainly, that disgruntled 9th Lancer, Pte. Grainger, denounced his officers as 'blue Blooded Bacon dryers, cheese mongers, or pork butchers that are in command and have money' and said that soldiers sometimes had 'the greatest contempt and hatred for those in position and command, whether civilian or military'.(5) Conversely, other men were fulsome in their praise of their officers.(6) Perhaps more typical than either type was Pte. Fanton (1/Cheshires). In the course of his unpublished memoir of army life, he mentions officers only once, and then in connection with criticism of 'bull'.(7)

(1) Beckett, Curragh Incident p.16.

(2) Anon. to Macdonald, nd., J. Ramsay Macdonald papers, PRO/30/69/1158, PRO. This letter may have been bogus, sent in an attempt to discredit the Labour Party.

(3) Letter, 25(?) Mar. 1914, F.A. Forster, in Beckett, Curragh Incident p.132.

(4) H. Benyon, Working For Ford (Harmondsworth, 1984 edn.) p.36.

(5) Diary, 5, 9 Apr. 1903, T. Grainger papers, 7104-31, NAM.

(6) A.F. Corbett, Service Through Six Reigns (Norwich, 1953) pp.47-48.

(7) Unpublished account, p.7, W. Fanton papers, 7802-78, NAM.

Officers played a very marginal role in the life of the average private. There were several areas in which the ranks did come together. One was on the sportsfield, where officers and men played in the same teams. This served the invaluable function of allowing feelings to be relieved without endangering discipline, for the private could hurl abuse at an officer from the touchline with impunity. Another meeting place was the regimental dramatic troupe.(1) A third was the freemasons' lodge, which men of all ranks could join, apparently without damaging discipline, although in 2/RWF privates were less likely to become freemasons than were NCOs. (2)

The views of articulate other ranks on the officer-man relationship are of interest. Horace Wyndham, who served as a gentleman ranker in a Fusilier regiment from 1890 to 1897, stated that officers saw little of their men, and did not know them individually. This was in part due to the nature of short service and the constant movement of personnel. He claimed that regimental officers were forced to spend hours before an inspection committing soldiers' details to memory so that they might impress a visiting general with their 'active and intelligent interest...in the affairs of the rank-and-file'.(3) John Lucy, (2/R.I. Rif.) writing of his service just prior to the Great War, likewise argued that the officers' fond belief that they understood the men was misguided. In reality the officer 'was not very much in touch' with the men. (4)

Wyndham believed that one of the principal obstacles to establishing closer relations was the attitude of the men themselves, who, 'like the average schoolboy' was 'most comfortable when he is furthest removed from those in authority over him'. Thus the private preferred to sing in the wet canteen

(1) Cairnes, Social Life p.26, 116, 120-22.

(2) Richards, Sahib p.157; J.M. Brereton, The British Soldier (London, 1986) pp.110-111.

(3) Wyndham, Queen's Service p.152; Wyndham, 'Officers and Men' p.182.

(4) Lucy, p.94.

rather ^{than} in the presence of officers who, meaning well, had organised a concert. Indeed, Wyndham implied that the officer class sometimes carried this aspect of paternalism to excess. What the private desired from his officers, argued Wyndham, was not close friendship but tact and 'an intelligent appreciation of their work and the conditions under which it is performed'.(1) Frank Richards (2/RWF) commented upon the occasion when a lonely officer struck up a conversation with him: 'it shows how hard pressed he must have felt...'
(2)

Interestingly, in view of the alleged preference of the ordinary ranker for gentleman amateur officers, Wyndham claimed that men greatly preferred officers who were knowledgable about their work. Paternal officers, who for instance ensured that the men's food was properly cooked at the end of a day on manoeuvres, were appreciated. Selfish officers, and the small number who made a fetish of 'spit and polish', were disliked. Above all, Wyndham stressed the need for officers to display man-management skills: to give the odd word of praise on parade or to visit a sick man in hospital. (3)

Wyndham, Lucy and Richards came to broadly similar conclusions about the nature of the officer-man relationship. The former wrote that relations needed 'no great alteration' provided that the 'officer is tactful'. Respect for officers, Lucy said, was high, and in time of war the gallantry of the officer 'won the greatest devotion, and very often the affection, of the men'. Richards believed that the social code of the army was based around 'mutual trust in military matters and matters of sport, but no social contact'.(4) Although

(1) Wyndham, 'Officers and Men' pp.183-84, 187.

(2) Richards, Sahib, p.274.

(3) Wyndham, 'Officers and Men' pp.183-90.

(4) Wyndham, 'Officers and Men' p.190; Lucy, p.94; Richards, Sahib, pp.155-56.

evidence suggests that other ranks were influenced by esprit de corps and regimental pride,(1) neither the view that the prewar army was one big happy family, or that which sees the inter-rank relationship as one of mutual antipathy is entirely correct. Generally, officers and men did respect each other, but relations were far from intimate.

Finally, two incidents will be cited to demonstrate how subtle the officer-man relationship could be. Shortly before the Great War, some men of 20th Hussars refused to parade because the cookhouse had closed before they could eat. A deputation of 'old soldiers' conferred with Maj. Cooke, the squadron commander. Cooke defused the situation by buying food for the men with his own money, and the men then went on parade. Cooke backed up this compromise with a visible show of force. The army soon gained its revenge by criming the protestors on various charges.

This incident, technically a mutiny but effectively a strike, is most instructive. Cooke displayed an impeccable grasp of the paternalistic relationship by acting to rectify a genuine grievance. He also displayed considerable managerial skill. Had he attempted to act in a doctrinaire fashion, applying the full weight of military law, this relatively trivial incident could have escalated into something more serious. By his subsequent actions Cooke reasserted his authority. As one ranker who was involved noted, the men's grievances might have been real but 'orders given in the Army simply had to be obeyed, and objections made afterwards'.(2) A similar lesson emerged from a recruits' 'round robin' complaining of a bullying NCO which was sent to the commander at an RFC base in 1913. The recruits were arrested and received a

(1) See for instance Maitland, passim.

(2) Unpublished account, p.10, R.G. Garrod papers, IWM.

'severe choking off' - but the NCO was posted away almost immediately.(1)

As will be discussed at length in later chapters, both officers and men recognised that their relationship was governed by certain unwritten rules. Provided both sides observed those rules, the relationship, although devoid of intimacy, was nonetheless effective.

(1) Unpublished account, C. King papers, DS/Misc/91, IWM.

Chapter 2

Officer-Man Relations and Discipline in the British Army 1902-14 (continued)

In this chapter, the social composition of, and the nature of officer-man relations and discipline in Edwardian auxiliary forces will be examined. The contemporary debate on discipline in the army as a whole will then be analysed, and a case study will be presented of a Regular officer with radical views on discipline and officer-man relations. Finally, the influence of prewar officer-man relations and discipline on the army of 1914-18 will be discussed.

2.1 The Other Ranks of the Auxiliary Forces

For the purposes of this thesis 'auxiliary forces' are defined as yeomanry (cavalry) and Volunteer infantry and artillery units. In 1908 the Territorial Force (TF) was created. The yeomanry were merged into the TF, but the Volunteer Force was abolished. However, in many cases Volunteer units simply changed their name, and there was much continuity between the two forces.(1) In general, militia and Special Reserve units, which did not see active service in the Great War, are not discussed in this thesis.

'A Yeomanry regiment may be said to be an expression of the best of the County on horseback...its ranks manned from the homesteads and farms whose tenure has often been held for successive generations and officered...from the great houses'. (2) As far as the ranks were concerned this ideal may have been generally realised in earlier times (3), but by 1902 the social composition of the yeomanry was undergoing significant change. As early as 1893

(1) I.F.W. Beckett, Riflemen Form (Aldershot, 1982) p.253.

(2) G. Fellows and B. Freeman, Historical Records of the South Nottinghamshire Hussars Yeomanry (Aldershot, 1928) p. XV.

(3) 'A Lieutenant-Colonel in the British Army', The British Army (London, 1899) p.29; I.F.W. Beckett, 'The Amateur Military Tradition in Britain', War and Society, 4, No. 2 (1986) p.7.

it was noted that the depression in agriculture was adversely affecting recruitment. (1) By the turn of the century most yeomanry regiments were enlisting increasing numbers of urban recruits. This reflected the increasing urbanisation of British society.

The change in the rural character of yeomanry regiments was not universal. Some regiments, such as the Montgomeryshire Yeomanry and the North Irish Horse contained a majority of 'traditional' personnel down to the eve of the Great War.(2) Significant proportions of traditional yeoman can be identified in other regiments; 45 per cent in the Derbyshire Yeomanry in 1914, 50 per cent in the Berks. Yeomanry in 1908. (3) Men of yeoman stock need not have lived or worked in a rural area. One farmer's son chose a career in an urban environment in Swindon but on the outbreak of war in 1914 joined the R. Wilts. Yeomanry. This man, who had learned many traditional equestrian skills as a child, was to all intents and purposes a prime example of the traditional yeoman class.(4)

Nevertheless, the urban recruit was becoming increasingly important. The Imperial Yeomanry, in large part recruited from the towns and cities, had given useful service during the Boer War.(5) In 1902 it was said that yeoman farmers were mostly found in the midland counties: 'They do not exist in other counties so much'.(6) This view is supported by the fact that when in 1901 the

(1) W.H. Goodenough and J.C. Dalton, The Army Book for the British Empire (London, 1893) p.374.

(2) R. Williams and B. Freeman, The Historical Records of the Yeomanry and Volunteers of Montgomeryshire 1803-1908 (Oswestry, 1909) p.97; E. Dorman, 'The North Irish Horse', AR III, (1913) p.540. Technically, the latter were a Special Reserve unit.

(3) G.A. Strutt (ed.), The Derbyshire Yeomanry War History 1914-19 (Derby, nd) p.8; J.P.B. Karlslake, 'The Berkshire Yeomanry' p.7, NAM.

(4) M. Moynihan, (ed) A Place Called Armageddon (Newton Abbot, 1974) pp.105-07.

(5) PP, 1902, LVI, Cmd. 803, 'Imperial Yeomanry Organisation and Equipment', p.731.

(6) Evidence of Maj.Gen. J.P. Brabazon, 21 Nov. 1902, PP, 1903, XL, Cmd 1789, 'Minutes of Evidence taken before the Royal Commission on the War in South Africa', p.295.

War Office was considering the raising of a unit in an apparently rural county, Sussex, it was thought that there were too few of the 'Yeoman class' to sustain a conventional cavalry regiment.(1) At governmental levels, officials were having to coming to terms with the practical effects of demographic change. In 1904 the Adjutant-General's Department stated that 'a large number of Yeomanry were really townspeople with no intimate knowledge of, or feeling for, horses'. (2)

While some disliked the concept of the urban yeoman, most units seemed to have accepted it (3) while some saw the skills of the urban recruit as invaluable for modern, 'scientific warfare'. (4) Having identified that the cities were a useful source of mounted auxiliary soldiers, several practical measures were instituted to stimulate recruiting. From 1901 onwards a series of reforms in the pay and conditions of the yeomanry occurred which opened the ranks to the less affluent. As a consequence, the numbers of yeomen who owned their own horses declined, along with standards of horsemanship.(5) On mobilisation in 1914 the standard of horses made available for the yeomanry was often grossly deficient.(6) It was seriously proposed to replace the yeomanry's horses with bicycles, and many regiments came to use a mixture of bicycles and horses.(7)

(1) 'Formation of Sussex Rgt [sic] of Imperial Yeomanry', WO32/7252, PRO.

(2) Quoted in S.D. Badsey, 'Fire and the Sword: The British Army and the Arme Blanche Controversy, 1871-1921', (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 1981) p.277.

(3) W.C. Bridge, 'Gold Medal Prize Essay' JRUSI L, No. 338, (1906) p.420; C. Stonham and B. Freeman, Historical Records of the Middlesex Yeomanry 1797-1927 (London, 1930) p.65.

(4) Karlslake, p.7, NAM.

(5) PP, 1902, LVI, Cmd. 803, 'Imperial Yeomanry Organisation and Equipment' p.732; R. Verdin, The Cheshire (Earl of Chester's) Yeomanry (Birkenhead, 1971) p.7; 'Cardigan', 'The Cavalry of the Territorial Army', Nineteenth Century (Nov. 1908) p.869.

(6) Strutt, p.3. See also H.H. Mulliner, 'Supply of Horses for the Territorial Force' JRUSI LVI, No.412, (1912) pp.807-26.

(7) Badsey, p.276; R.A. Johnson, 'Military Cycling and the Home Army' JRUSI L, No.336, (1906) pp.167.

The raising of four yeomanry regiments in the London area was the logical consequence of the urbanisation of the yeomanry. A study of one of these regiments, the Surrey Yeomanry, raised in April 1901, reveals that it had a distinctly middle-class character. (1) An insistence on potential recruits being able to ride was not long maintained (2) and it seems likely that a more proletarian type of recruit was later admitted but evidence dating from 1909 suggests that the 'class' character was still evident.(3)

A sister unit, the Westminster Dragoons, was also socially exclusive.(4) Sheer expense would appear to have confined this corps to a reasonably affluent class of men. A typical skilled London craftsman in 1900 was paid about 38s per week, (5) while the would-be recruit to the regiment had to be prepared to pay £2-2s to join, with a further annual subscription of £1-1s. Other typical expenses included joining the regimental shooting club (2s 6d) with a similar fee payable as an annual subscription, or attending a dinner at the Trocadero (51s 6d). (6) Constant harping on the socially exclusive nature of the regiment drew the acid comment:

Scarlet coats faced purple, and blue breeches with a yellow stripe is the modest uniform favoured by the "Gentleman's Corps". A corps of mere common, vulgar people might have insisted upon having something loud in the way of regimentals. (7).

Auxiliary infantry and artillery units could be divided into two categories: the 'class corps', which like the London yeomanry regiments were recruited from

(1) H.A. Barclay to Lord Middleton, 18 Feb. 1900, W032/7249; PWYG 1, No.2, (1903) p.14.

(2) PWYG 1, No.3, (1903), pp.22, 24.

(3) Unidentified newspaper report of annual dinner held on 6 Jan. 1909, Surrey Yeomanry, B Squadron, Woking Troop Report Book 1908, 7305-74, NAM.

(4) 'Raising of Yeomanry in London', W032/7255; Regimental Order, Westminster Dragoons, 3 Oct. 1901, 7503-21-5, NAM.

(5) G.D.H. Cole and R. Postgate, The British Common People 1746-1946 (London, 1961 edn.) p.443.

(6) Figures are drawn from materials in Westminster Dragoons archive, 7503-21-5, NAM.

(7) Unidentified newspaper clipping, c.1903, 7503-21-5, NAM.

men of some social standing, and the rest. Although the former have received more attention, the Edwardian Volunteer and Territorial Forces recruited the bulk of their members from the working classes. Although the numerous Volunteer Rifle Corps raised in 1859 had had a strongly middle-class character, by 1904, much to the disgust of some venerable Volunteers,(1) 70 per cent of the ranks of the Volunteers were drawn from the working class. 40.3 per cent were artisans, 9.2 per cent were clerks and only 1.6 per cent were professional men. (2) One battalion, 2nd VB E. Surreys, roughly matched this national profile. This unit, recruited partly in the London suburbs, was in 1904 composed of a few gentlemen, a 'fair proportion' of clerks, some small tradesmen, a 'large proportion' of artisans, and in the 'county companies', labourers and men in country pursuits. The unit contained very few casual labourers, and the service of those who did join was generally short. The average earnings of the rank and file were estimated at 35s per week, which was in itself a further indication of the predominance of artisans within this corps. (3)

It is possible that the next few years saw a slight decline in the social standard of the infantry. In 1911 it was noted that increasing numbers of labourers, and fewer tradesmen and clerks, were joining the TF, and the intelligence of the average Territorial recruit 'differs but little, if anything, from that of the Regular recruit'.(4) Like their Regular counterparts, numbers of auxiliary recruits were suffering from the effects of

(1) The LRB Record V, (1907) p.10.

(2) H. Cunningham, The Volunteer Force (London, 1975) pp.33-34; Beckett, Riflemen Form pp.82-83.

(3) Evidence of Col. E.H. Bailey, 5 Nov. 1903, PP, 1904, XXXI, Cmd. 2062, 'Minutes of Evidence taken before the Royal Commission on the Militia and Volunteers', p.296.

(4) 'Reports (with summary of General Officers Commanding-in-Chief) on the Progress made by the Territorial Force in attaining the contemplated standard of military Efficiency for Home Defence, and the Relative Value of Territorial Troops as compared with corresponding units and Formations of the Regular Army [hereafter GOC Report] (1911) p.9, WOL.

poverty. 17/, 18/, 19/ and 20/Londons were described as being recruited 'mainly from artisans who are badly fed and nourished and who are frequently small, of poor physique, and with little stamina'. (1) 'Slum battalions' were also found elsewhere. The general standard of physique of 7/DWR, recruited in Yorkshire, was described as 'miserable'; in general, battalions which included large numbers of mill hands were noted for the poor physique of their soldiers. (2)

The artisan, not the labourer or clerk, was recognised as being the backbone of the TF. (3) The London Regiment offers many examples of these artisan-dominated corps, 6/Londons having companies sponsored by the South Metropolitan Gas Co., Amalgamated Press and Associated Newspapers. (4) In some units, such as the Cambridgeshire Battalion and 5/DCLI, middle-class and working-class men served together. (5) Unlike the Regular army, the Volunteers and TF recruited from the artisan rather than the labourer.

Many of the remarks already made about the social exclusivity of the Westminster Dragoons and the Surrey Yeomanry also applied to infantry 'class corps' such the London Scottish (14/Londons), 6/Manchesters, and 5/SR. They recruited very largely from white collar workers: it was said that London class corps contained 'men of higher intelligence and education, and finer

(1) 'Reports of General Officers commanding-in-chief on the Physical Capacity of Territorial Force Troops to Carry Out the Work and Endure the Hardships which were Incidental to the Manoeuvres, 1910' (hereafter Physical Capacity Report) p.2, WOL. See also GOC Report (1909) p.17, WOL.

(2) GOC Report (1911) p.20, WOL.

(3) Bethune to PS of Secretary of State, 27 Nov. WO32/11242, PRO.

(4) W. Richards, His Majesty's Territorial Army (London, nd) III, p.115; H.D. Myers, KRS Q.

(5) E. Riddell and M.C. Clayton, The Cambridgeshires 1914-18 (Cambridge, 1934) pp.1-2; E.C. Matthews, With the Cornwall Territorials on the Western Front (Cambridge, 1921) p.4.

physique than most of the urban corps of the country'.(1) Some charged entrance fees, and all were concerned to exclude proletarians from their ranks.(2) About 60 per cent of the other ranks of 7/Welch (Cyclists) were 'young professionals and businessmen of the same social standing of (sic) the officers'. (3) A member of the LRB said that a strong motivation for 'young men in the banks, insurance offices, the Civil Service, and the City' to join class corps was to enjoy social activities and sporting facilities.(4)

2.2 The Officers of the Auxiliary Forces

In 1899 it was claimed that half of the yeomanry's officers 'consist of retired cavalry officers, landed proprietors and enthusiastic fox-hunters'. (5) This assessment was broadly accurate. Although in 1905 the yeomanry was some 25 per cent below establishment in officers, (6) service in the local regiment was a favourite pastime of such pillars of the Edwardian social and political elite as J.E.B. Seeley (Hants. Carabiners) and Walter Long (R. Wilts. Yeomanry).(7) Although half of the officers of the Oxfordshire Hussars, the Duke of Marlborough and Winston Churchill among them, had non-rural occupations connections with the countryside remained strong: 'all had been accustomed to horses and hunting from their earliest days'.(8) In the yeomanry as a whole, substantial numbers of officers had previously served in the Regular army, 34

(1) Sir J.H.A. Macdonald, 'The Volunteers in 1905', JRUSI, XLIX, No.330, (1905) p.917.

(2) A.M. McGilchrist, The Liverpool Scottish 1900-19 (Liverpool, 1930) p.4; LRB Record V, (1911) p.32.

(3) H. Morrey-Salmon, KRS Q; GOC Report (1909) p.67, WOL.

(4) B. Latham, A Territorial Soldier's War (Aldershot, 1967) p.1.

(5) 'Lieutenant-Colonel', p.189.

(6) H. Le Roy-Lewis, 'The Imperial Yeomanry in 1905', JRUSI XLIX, No.331, (1905) p.1031.

(7) J.E.B. Seeley, Adventure (London, 1930) p.91.

(8) A. Keith-Falconer, The Oxfordshire Hussars in the Great War (London, 1927) p. 25.

per cent of officers serving between 1901 and 1909 in the Montgomeryshire Yeomanry, and 20 per cent of officers serving between 1901 and 1914 in the Westminster Dragoons, for example.(1) It was not uncommon for successive generations of one family to provide officers for a regiment. (2) Why was service in the yeomanry so popular among the British elite?

One reason is perhaps that it was regarded simply as an extension of the principle of noblesse oblige, a responsibility being the defence of the realm in the face of what was perceived as an increasing threat from Germany. This neo-feudal attitude can be linked to the obligation imposed on many tenant farmers to serve in the yeomanry, although this practice seems to have declined markedly by the Edwardian period.(3) Moreover, auxiliary cavalry had proved to be useful in the Boer War, however inappropriate the lessons learned on the veldt might have been for combat in southern England.(4) Finally, a yeomanry commission, like its Regular counterpart, helped to confer respectability on the nouveau-riche. As 'new money' sought to emulate older-established families by purchasing country estates, they naturally adopted the tradition of service in the yeomanry. The presence of families of Jewish extraction in the Royal Bucks Hussars earned the regiment the nickname of the 'Flying Foreskins'. (5) At a lower social level, a potato merchant's clerk, after service in South Africa, attempted to obtain a commission in the Lothian and Berwickshires in order to improve his social standing.(6)

(1) Figures are drawn from Williams and Freeman, pp.116-123 and material in Westminster Dragoons archive, 7503-21-5, NAM.

(2) For the case of the Northumberland Hussars, see H. Tegner, The Story of a Regiment (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1969) pp.5-7.

(3) Le Roy-Lewis, p.1042.

(4) Bridge, p.418.

(5) Beckett, 'Amateur Military Tradition in Britain' p.12.

(6) Obituary of D. Anderson, The Scotsman 8 May 1918; information supplied by Dr. D. Anderson.

Not the least of attractions of service in the yeomanry was the opportunity to participate in equestrian activities. The Regular adjutant of the R. Glos. Hussars observed that the training season 'was most carefully timed not to interfere with the May-fly season and to finish before the hunting.' (1) When the Essex Yeomanry was raised in 1901, the four squadrons were raised on the basis of the four hunts in the county.(2) The yeomanry also allowed a man to sample the more enjoyable parts of military life without the necessity of making a career in the army. The history of the Cheshire Yeomanry contains many examples of a social life which was similar to that of a smart Regular cavalry regiment.(3) Service in the yeomanry, Churchill wrote in 1903, was 'a great drain' on the resources of impecunious officers.(4) In 1902 it was officially estimated that it cost the average yeomanry officer £100 per annum 'for the privilege of belonging to the force, entirely separate from their pay and allowances'. (5) It seems likely that membership of some regiments involved the outlay of even greater sums.

Auxiliary infantry officers were generally of a lower social class than their Regular and yeomanry counterparts. (6) In 1904 just over 6 per cent of Volunteer officers were 'Gentlemen of independent means', while nearly 65 per cent were either 'Professional men' or 'Men in business on their own account'. That a proportion of officers were of lower- or lower middle-class origin is

(1) A. Carton de Wiart, Happy Odyssey (London, 1950) pp.43-44.

(2) G.O. Rickword, The Essex Yeomanry - Records and Recollections 1901-14 (reprinted from Essex Review LX, (April 1951) p.4.

(3) Verdin, pp. 7, 33-34.

(4) R.S. Churchill, (ed.) Winston S Churchill 1901-1914 Companion, 1, p.254. See also D. Hart-Davis, (ed.) End of an Era: Letters and Journals of Sir Alan Lascelles 1887-1920 (London, 1986) p.124.

(5) PP, 1902, LVI, Cmd.803, 'Imperial Yeomanry Organisation and Equipment' p.732.

(6) Viscount Mersey, Journals and Memories (London, 1952) p.134.

suggested by the 21.3 per cent who were recorded as being 'employees', although this term is too imprecise to easily ascertain their exact social status. (1)

It is unlikely that there was a high incidence of working-class officers in the Auxiliary Forces. In 1904, 59 per cent of the Volunteer officers had attended public schools and universities.(2) Other evidence from TF units also suggests substantial numbers of middle-class officers. The officers' mess of 1/8th Londons (Post Office Rifles) was dominated by men of middle-class occupations.(3) In 1911 it was reported that Territorial infantry officers were 'almost all business men'. (4)

The middle-class domination of the auxiliary officer corps was in part a result of the fact that the upper- and upper-middle classes found service in the TF, except for the yeomanry, unattractive. Pace the alleged impact of the public schools in promoting militarism, in the period 1908-12 only 4 per cent of former members of cadet corps took a Territorial commission, and less than 2 per cent took a commission in the Special Reserve.(5) A report by Col. L. Banon, the Assistant Adjutant-General (AAG) in 1912, concluded that this situation arose from a variety of factors ranging from family hostility to the TF (either because of attachment to the old militia and Volunteers or a desire to introduce conscription), to the decadence of the young, which had eroded the military spirit. The high standards required of an officer were a deterrent, as was the expense involved, and many suitable candidates for commissions

(1) Cunningham, p.34.

(2) Ibid, p.58.

(3) A.H. Maude, (ed.) The 47th (London) Division, 1914-19 (London, 1922) pp.6-7.

(4) GOC Report (1911) p.54, WOL. See also comments of Maj. Marker, 'Report on a Conference of General Staff officers at the Staff College' (1909) p.22, SCL.

(5) Col. L. Banon, 'Report on the Supply of Officers for the Special Reserve and Territorial Force', 23 Dec.1912, p.2, WOL.

preferred to serve in the ranks of class corps. The basic patriotism of British youth, was not, however, questioned.(1)

The officer corps of the Volunteers was widely regarded as being socially second-rate.(2) According to a wartime TF officer, pedantic and officious men who held relatively lowly positions in civil life 'formed the great majority [of officers] in the city regiments'.(3) Although one Regular believed that successful businessmen were 'accustomed to think for themselves' and were well placed to judge character, and, somewhat less enthusiastically, in 1908 the CIGS stated that middle-class auxiliary officers were 'enthusiastic' if 'touchy', many Regular officers were concerned about the low social status of auxiliary officers.(4)

Col. Banon's report of 1912 expressed the view that auxiliary units should be 'officered by young men of good social standing', whom he defined as being 'the sons of the gentry and professional classes', on the grounds of their paternalism and 'their hereditary aptitude for command'. He doubted whether members of nouveau-riche families possessed these qualities. However, he saw that eventually auxiliary officers would have to be drawn from a wider social background, and believed that some could 'acquire the ideas, manners and standard of the professional classes'. (5)

(1) Col. L. Banon, 'Report on the Supply of Officers for the Special Reserve and Territorial Force', 23 Dec. 1912, pp.3-5, WOL. See also Macdonald, 'Volunteers' pp. 915-16.

(2) Evidence of Col. E.H. Bailey, 5 Nov.1903, PP, 1904, XXXI, Cmd. 2062, 'Minutes of Evidence taken before the Royal Commission on the Militia and Volunteers', p.298; Sir H. Roberts, 'The Auxiliary Forces Commission', USM XXIX, No.909, p.504.

(3) D. Wheatley, Officer and Temporary Gentleman (London, 1978) pp.53-54.

(4) Comments of Col. R.H. Davies, 'Report of a Conference of General Staff Officers at the Staff College' (1910) p.55, SCL and Gen. Hon. Sir N.G. Lyttelton, 'Report on a Conference of General Staff Officers at the Staff College' (1908) p.39.

(5) Col. L. Banon, 'Report on the Supply of Officers for the Special Reserve and Territorial Force', 23 Dec. 1912, pp.5-6, WOL.

The social status of non-yeomanry auxiliary officers thus gave cause for official concern. However, the AAG's pragmatic conclusion reflects the spirit which underlay the decision to commission Regular NCOs on mobilisation, and anticipated the discarding by the wartime army of the dogma that only men with a public school background could possess leadership qualities.

2.3 Discipline in the Auxiliary Forces

The social composition of the auxiliary forces was reflected in the disciplinary regime of its units. An important difference between the disciplinary structure of Auxiliary and Regular regiments lay in the role of the NCO. Many auxiliary NCOs were drawn from the foreman class.(1) Some contemporaries saw this as being beneficial to discipline, for the 'foreman, small manager or head employee' would allegedly make a good NCO, 'for the same qualities which have got him on in civil life get him on in the regiment and give him a sense of discipline and command' (2); they were 'ready-made' NCOs 'accustomed to take responsibility and to take charge of men'. (3) Kipling, writing of a TF battalion in 1914, claimed that the officers knew their men 'intimately' in civilian life, and the relationships built up between sergeants and privates who normally knew each other in the role of foreman and employee enabled the unit to work 'with something of the precision of a big business'.(4) A related point was made by an officer of the West Kent Yeomanry:

(1) Cunningham, p.64.

(2) GOC Report (1910) p.63, WOL.

(3) R.S.S. Baden-Powell, 'Training for Territorials', JRUSI LII, No.369, (1908) p.1480.

(4) R. Kipling, The New Armies in Training (London, 1915) p.59.

Frequently each troop was a happy family from the same town or district, and if a Private received an order from a Sergeant with the reply "All right, Ginger," it was not a term of disrespect but merely the natural manner of answering a friend who has, we will say, married your sister. (1)

Others had a less rosy view of the grafting of an industrial hierarchy onto a military one. Some NCOs of units recruited largely from a single workplace were selected because of their hierarchical status rather than their military ability. Nor was it always the case that the status of the workplace was maintained in the TF. Among the factors cited in 1909 as tending to undermine the position of the NCO were, in addition to the fear of losing face by the admittance of ignorance of an NCO's powers, the fear of upsetting subordinates who were socially superior, or who 'held higher positions in business'.(2)

Many Regular officers identified NCOs as being the weakest link in the disciplinary chain of the TF, as these comments from a report of 1909 indicate:

Generally speaking, a Territorial NCO has little authority over his men, and does not understand what is required him in respect of discipline or the maintenance of discipline.

At present, the men will readily obey an officer or a non-commissioned officer of the Permanent Staff [ie a Regular], but do not attach much importance to the orders of the Territorial non-commissioned officer. (3)

In 1911 Col. Fanshawe, the Regular commander of a TF brigade, stated that Territorials were enthusiastic, but he feared the time when the novelty of soldiering palled and the NCOs had to drive the men on. TF NCOs and officers gave orders not

in such a way as to ensure instant obedience and action, but rather as if they were asking a favour which they hardly expected to be granted in full, and the men appear to be doing things 'to oblige', often after some delay, as if they had been thinking over before acting whether the action was necessary or not. This leads to slowness and indecision. (4)

(1) C. Ponsonby, West Kent (QO) Yeomanry and 10th (Yeomanry) Battalion The Buffs 1914-19 (London, 1920) pp.5-6. See also unpublished account, p.5, A.S. Benbow papers, PP/MCR/146, IWM; unpublished account, p.4, A.W. Bradbury papers, IWM.

(2) GOC Report (1909), pp.9, 45, 65, WOL.

(3) GOC Report (1909) pp.17, 54, WOL.

(4) GOC Report (1911) p.15, WOL. Fanshawe went on to command a TF division, the 48th, in the Great War.

Things were little different in the yeomanry.(1)

The leadership of auxiliary units possessed little real coercive power. Fines or dismissal from the unit (which carried some social disgrace) were, in practice, the only formal sanctions available. (2) By the end of the nineteenth century, the discipline of the Volunteers had improved, (3) but still fell far short of Regular standards. To take one example, in 1896, a Volunteer NCO was reduced to the rank of private 'for writing a disgusting letter to the Adjutant'. (4) An attempt to impose Regular-style discipline would have led to men leaving the auxiliary forces. Thus although Volunteers were subject to the Mutiny Act while brigaded with Regulars, company commanders of 4th VB E. Surreys were did not have 'the courage to hold an Orderly Room in camp'. (5) In short, the discipline of auxiliary units was of a very different nature from that of the Regulars. As, under conditions of peace, auxiliaries, unlike Regulars, were under military discipline for only a few hours a week, it could hardly be otherwise.

2.4 Officer-Man Relations in the Auxiliary Forces

Given the absence of the tools of formal discipline, discipline in auxiliary units was largely reliant on the social authority of the officer. Not surprisingly, considering the social profile of yeomanry officers, the closest approach to the inter-rank relationship in the Regular army was found in the

(1) E.W. Gladstone, The Shropshire Yeomanry 1795-1945 (Manchester, 1953) p.191.

(2) C.J. Blomfield, Once an Artist Always an Artist (London, 1921) pp.20-21; 'An Adjutant', 'The Volunteer Company Officer', USM XXVII, No.895, (1903) p.313.

(3) I.F.W. Beckett, 'The Problem of Military Discipline in the Volunteer Force, 1859-1899', JSAHR LVI, (1978) pp.66-78.

(4) Order Book, 5th VB R. Bde, 6 May 1896, WO 70/14, PRO.

(5) Anon, The 23rd London Regiment 1798-1919 (London, 1936) pp.6-7.

yeomanry. The ideal of officer-man relationships in the yeomanry was that they should be the 'happiest and most cordial possible', based on 'a true feeling of comradeship and mutual confidence'. (1) Yeomanry officers had their share of paternalism; in March 1907 E.E. Fiennes MP stated that many yeomanry units, at considerable expense to their officers bought tents and 'complete camp equipment for the messing of the men'.(2)

Paternalism was mixed with tact. It is significant that a prewar member of R. Wilts. Yeomanry complained bitterly about the arrival of a Regular officer who ignored the easy-going traditions of the yeomanry and instituted Regular practices:

we are not a blithering pack of fools! This is an instance of the lack of imagination of a Regular Commander, who all his life has commanded Regular Army men, and who now cannot see the difference in the mode of treatment desirable with a totally different style of man that he has under him in the Territorials, and Yeomanry at that...(3)

Accounts of yeomanry dinners give something of the flavour of officer-man relations. A witness of the dinner of B Squadron of the Westminster Dragoons was left 'in no doubt about the popularity of Major Sir Simeon Stuart Bart' with the men, and Trooper Hogg 'was loud in the praise of all the officers'.(4) In 1909 Lt. Crundell of the Dover Troop of the East Kent Yeomanry referred to his men as 'comrades - for he was proud to look upon them as such', and there was later a call for a regimental (as opposed to squadron or troop) dinner to 'cement the happy relationship' between officers and men and 'bring all into closer sympathy with each other'. (5) It is less remarkable that such sentiments should be

(1) Keith-Falconer, p.26.

(2) Hansard, 4th Series, Commons, CLXXI, (22 Mar. 1907) col. 1289.

(3) Quoted in Moynihan, p.120.

(4) Unidentified newspaper cutting, Surrey Yeomanry archive, 7503-74, NAM.

(5) East Kent Yeoman IV, No.1 (1909) p.9.

expressed at a convivial dinner than such an event should be held at all, for it is almost unthinkable that even the most enlightened of Regular officers would have dined in similar circumstances with their men.

The relationship between officer and man in the yeomanry thus seems to have been less distant than that prevailing in Regular units. The reasons behind this peculiar yeomanry spirit would appear to have been a mixture of recognition of the limitations of discipline in an auxiliary unit and paternalism. Moreover, horses, and the possibility of being ridiculed by civilians gave officers and men a commonality of interest that was (in general) denied to Regulars. (1)

Matters were a little different in auxiliary infantry units. Underlying the distaste of many Regular officers for middle-class auxiliary officers was the belief that that, unlike Regular and yeomanry officers, they lacked the social authority to command. An ungentlemanly Volunteer officer, argued one writer in 1905, was 'apt to play the Jack-in-Office'. (2) Certainly, such units were heavily reliant on the individual qualities of the officer. An officer of the 4th VB E. Surreys declared that officers could secure obedience 'only by their personal magnetism in handling their men'. (3) Tactful handling of their men was essential. The discipline of one class corps, the 5/Londons or LRB, was described as 'exceptional' but 'incomprehensible to a critical outsider', and newly arrived Regular adjutants in particular found it difficult to comprehend that discipline could be maintained 'without the administration of military law'. (4) Officers and men were not divided by a social chasm - in some

(1) I explore the social history of the Edwardian yeomanry in a forthcoming article.

(2) 'Trainband', 'The Dearth of Volunteer Officers', USM, XXX, No.916, p.648.

(3) Anon, 23rd Londons p.6; see also I.F.W. Beckett, The Amateur Military Tradition (Manchester, 1992) p.104.

(4) Anon, The History of the London Rifle Brigade (London, 1921) p.60.

units officers were often promoted from the ranks (1) - and it was perfectly possible for a private and an officer to be friends or workmates in civilian life. Peer-group pressure was an effective way of dealing with miscreants. By the exercise 'of good sense and tact on both sides', discipline was maintained 'without familiarity' while on duty. (2) Off duty, at social events 'every member of the LRB, whatever his rank, met on a basis of comradeship; on parade Army discipline and routine took over again'. (3) In short, both an informal officer-man relationship and good discipline was maintained by the men's self-discipline, and by peer-group pressure and sense of duty: as a London Scottish officer explained, 'Esprit de corps is the foundation of all real discipline'. (4)

2.5 Officer-Man Relations and Discipline in Auxiliary Units: Three Case Studies

The journal of the Surrey Yeomanry offers a wealth of evidence concerning the nature of ^{the} regiment's disciplinary system and inter-rank relations. All ranks could contribute to the journal and the regular feature of a column giving news and views from the various squadrons provided a mouthpiece - albeit at secondhand - for less articulate rankers.

It is clear from contributions to this journal that some rankers were very conscious of their relatively high social status and intelligence, and sought insulation from their social inferiors. In October 1903, Col. Cubitt called for 'Groups' to be recruited among the men's friends and acquaintances in order to stimulate recruiting. These groups were to be kept together 'as much

- (1) J.H. Lindsay (ed.) The London Scottish in the Great War (London, 1925) p.14; J. Reith, Wearing Spurs (London, 1966) p.17.
- (2) Anon, London Rifle Brigade p.60.
- (3) Latham, p.2.
- (4) Lindsay, p.13.

as possible in tents and in the field when in camp'. (1) This suggestion clearly foreshadows the 'Pals' concept of 1914, and shows an awareness of the importance of the primary group in the unit cohesion and morale. In November 1903 a regimental member claimed that such a system was already in use in A Squadron to some extent, and it would help to stimulate recruiting by preserving the 'class corps' nature of the regiment. (2)

The regimental leadership recognised, and made allowances for, the nature of the middle-class citizen soldier. A measure of egalitarianism almost unheard of in a Regular unit was tolerated. A trooper was sarcastic at an officer's expense when the latter was late for riding practice and then wrote about it in the journal, (3) and the journal featured a column specifically designed for the purpose of allowing rankers to give vent to annoyance. (4) The journal also featured a protracted and heated debate between Capt. the Hon. Eric Thesiger and an NCO over the former's (rather provocative) views on the regiment's NCOs.(5) Although on one occasion a correspondent used extravagant praise of NCOs to attack officers, asking whether the quality of the former was the reason for the absenteeism of squadron officers, NCOs were not immune from attack. In June 1903 'A Keen Yeoman' attacked the attendance record of NCOs at drills. 'How can the rank and file', he asked, 'be expected to take an interest in the doings of the regiment when they, unhappily, must realise that the "non-coms" do not take an interest in them and their progress towards becoming efficient Yeomen'? (6)

Paradoxically, such public complaints by rankers about NCOs and officers, which in a Regular unit would have been considered as prejudicial to discipline,

(1) PWYG 1, No.6, (1903) p.57.

(2) PWYG 1, No.7,(1903) p.72.

(3) PWYG 1, No.4 (1903) p.34.

(4) PWYG 1, No.2 (1903) p.11.

(5) This debate began in PWYG 1, No.11, (1904) p.26.

(6) PWYG 1, No.2 (1903) p.11.

are an indication of strong, but unorthodox discipline. In the very first journal, a contributor declared that the regiment stood for discipline, but also 'individual and intelligent initiative; and the army or regiment that acts upon this principle must be the most efficient in the warfare of the future'. (1) The complaints about officers and NCOs must be seen in this light. It was not a question, as in the Regular army, of regimental leaders having to watch out for malingering and other 'old soldier' habits: a substantial number of rankers wanted to improve their skills as soldiers. Officers had to live up to the high standards demanded by their men. 'There is a feeling of confidence begotten in the hearts of men above that of respect for a proved and trusty leader...' claimed one correspondent in 1904,

with the standard of intelligence prevailing in the class of men from which our Yeomanry are recruited, the measure of a good officer is soon taken and his value appreciated.(2)

Inefficient or lazy yeomen came under pressure from their peers. The scruffy appearance of an (unnamed) yeoman was condemned in the journal:

the "powers that be" were very lenient with us...even if full dress is uncomfortable for walking out, let it be remembered that it is "orders", and so grin and bear it. (3)

Yeomen who were infrequent in their attendance at parades also were subject to censure; on separate occasions absentees were reminded of the cost to the regiment in post cards 'to get you to put in the small number of drills you have to do to become efficient' and reproached for failing to appreciate the efforts of the regimental's leaders to make soldiering a pleasant experience.(4)

Comments such as these suggest why the regimental leadership tolerated what, in a Regular regiment, would have been seen as insubordination. The men were

(1) PWYG 1, No.1 (1903) p.3.

(2) PWYG 1, No.9, (1904) p.96.

(3) PWYG 1, No.1, (1903) p.5.

(4) PWYG 1, No.1, (1903) p.7; ibid 1, No.3 (1903) p.23.

very different from the average Regular private. Many held positions of responsibility in civilian life, and, above all, many were keen to become 'efficient yeomen', and they devoted their spare time to this end. The evidence of their enthusiasm and self-discipline largely negated the need for Regular-style, externally-imposed discipline, which would have been counter-productive. The informal relationship between officers and men, based on mutual trust, was a by-product of this disciplinary system.

Informal disciplinary regimes were also to be found in some units recruited from the working classes. Both 6/W. Yorks. and 7/Manchesters had a relatively cosmopolitan social profile. The former recruited mainly from the mills and warehouses of Bradford, but with a company raised from the old boys of Bradford Grammar School. (1) The latter were recruited from the suburbs of the city, and in the ranks could be found both unskilled labourers such as carters and packers and skilled men such as builders and joiners. Other soldiers had solidly middle-class occupations such as clerks and draughtsmen.(2) Both units, unlike the Surrey Yeomanry or the LRB, thus contained considerable numbers of the class of man from which the Regular army was recruited.

Neither battalion set much store by formal discipline. The 6/W. Yorks., for instance, marched off parade in January 1914 45 minutes late, only 80 strong and 'Even this was considered a good attendance!'(3) The ethos of the Territorial was very different from that of the Regular. The former took pride in their civilian, non-military - or even anti-military - attitudes. Gerald Hurst, an officer of 7/Manchesters wrote that they were

(1) E.V. Tempest, History of 6th Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment (Bradford, 1921) pp.1-2, 12.

(2) G.B. Hurst, With the Manchesters in the East (Manchester, 1917) pp.1,7.

(3) Tempest, p.4.

almost arrogantly civilian...The social traditions of the middle-class urban population, from which the Territorials were drawn, had never fostered the military spirit, nor the power to recognise or understand that spirit in others. (1)

Similarly, most members of the 6/W. Yorks. enlisted 'as a relief from the monotony of civil life, as an outlet for high spirits, and as a means of spending a healthy holiday with good comrades' rather than for militaristic reasons. (2)

Both units enjoyed good inter-rank relations and high esprit de corps. Regular modes of officer-man relations and discipline were simply inappropriate. A Regular brigadier described the discipline of 6/W. Yorks. as being that of 'good will', (3) while Hurst wrote of the 'comradeship' which produced an 'easy relationship between officers and men...[which] was the despair of the more crusted Regular martinet', a form of discipline which was maintained without requiring the 'the banishment of individuality and of the exercise of intellect from Regimental life'. (4)

It was claimed that in 6/W. Yorks. orders were at first obeyed 'simply because of a mutual confidence and respect between officers and men, similar to that in a workshop or any small society'. While the 'first bond was personal', discipline, when it developed, was used to 'strengthen and regularize relationships already existing'. (5) The personal element in these units was reinforced by the fact that officers and men were drawn from the same city. Both Bradford and Manchester had a strong tradition of civic pride, which was reflected in battalion esprit de corps. Manchester's Territorials had the advantage of possessing one of the few brigadiers to be appointed from a TF

(1) Hurst, p.6.

(2) Tempest, p.3.

(3) Ibid p.10.

(4) Hurst, p.2; G.B. Hurst, in S.J. Wilson, The Seventh Manchesters (Manchester, 1920) p.xiii.

(5) Tempest, p.10.

unit, Noel Lee, allowing Hurst to claim that 'all ranks, from Brigadier-General to private, came from one neighbourhood, and viewed life from much the same angle'. (1)

Another example of the importance of the personal element in leadership of Territorials can be drawn from another northern urban battalion, 6/LF. The intake of recruits had increased when an officer began to take a direct personal interest in the welfare of the men, which included the provision of extra sporting facilities. (2)

In sum, although the social composition of the Surrey Yeomanry was rather different from that of 6/W. Yorks. and 7/Manchesters, all three units adopted, from a mixture, one suspects, of pragmatism and genuine pride in the nature of the unit, a style of discipline and officer-man relations which was very different from that of a Regular unit.

2.6 Regular Views on Auxiliary Discipline

While some TF units did not have such an informal disciplinary code (3) the need for careful handling of auxiliary soldiers was understood by many Regulars. Col. Williams, the commander of North Midland Mounted Brigade went on record that Regular NCOs posted to TF units as Permanent Staff should undergo a six month probationary period to judge both their skill as an 'instructor and a disciplinarian', and, significantly, their 'tact and zeal in the performance of his duties'. (4) Generally speaking, it would appear that most Regular officers and NCOs posted to TF units managed to adapt to the

(1) Hurst, p.8.

(2) WO 32/11236, PRO.

(3) See Kernahan, passim.

(4) GOC Report (1910) p.14.

peculiar disciplinary system and officer-man relationship, although one wonders how a Regular officer would have adjusted to the state of affairs in the 9/Manchesters, where among other things, an officer was heard to advise a soldier to 'b-r off'.(1)

Territorial discipline coloured many Regulars officers' views of the military efficiency of the TF.(2) One of the kinder views was that of Lt.Gen. Sir Arthur Paget, GOC Eastern Command, who in 1909 likened the relationship of the Regulars and TF to that of a 'strong, well grown man in the prime of life and a young, immature but healthy child who...should some day develop into maturity'.(3) In 1910 GOC Western Command considered that the value of Territorial infantry compared to the Regulars was 5.1:10 while the 'ratio' for Territorial artillery was only 3.3:10.(4) In 1911 Paget placed on record his belief that after four months training, Territorial infantry would still be 50 per cent less effective than Regulars, and he believed that TF artillery was even worse off. (5) The fact that the TF was intended for home defence only was scant comfort, given the prevalent fears of invasion.

There was much evidence to stoke the fears of Regular officers, although the seriousness with which training was taken varied from unit to unit. Much depended upon the character and inclinations of individual officers and men. In response to a question about the training of 6/Essex, one soldier answered that he took it seriously, because it was his hobby, but the unit as a whole did not.(6) In 6/Londons, the arrival of a new CO brought about a drive for

(1) Unsigned letters, 10, 13, 14 Sept. 1914 H.E. Politzer papers, P.430, IWM.

(2) Two notable exceptions were French and Baden-Powell. See R. Holmes, The Little Field Marshal (London, 1981) p.131; Baden-Powell, 'Training for Territorials' pp.1474-77.

(3) GOC Reports (1909) p.20. For another fairly optimistic view, see minute by Bethune, 2 July 1912, WO 32/9192, PRO.

(4) GOC Reports (1909) p.68.

(5) GOC Reports (1911) p.10.

(6) E.A. Loftus, KRS Q.

efficiency, while Pte. S. Blagg of the South Notts. Yeomanry welcomed the replacement of a lenient commander by a stricter officer because it brought a sense of purpose to their training.(1)

In some circles, the Edwardian yeomanry (as opposed to the Imperial Yeomanry of the Boer War) seems to have been a byword for inefficiency. One critic claimed that the fortnight's 'meagre annual training' was

chiefly regarded by the majority, both officers and men, as a pleasant outing during which mounted competitions, regimental sports, and local race meetings are the first consideration...

Training, it was claimed, rated a very poor second.(2) While there was often an element of polemicism in such comments, a number of yeomen admitted the truth of some of the charges. A former member of Sherwood Rangers recalled that:

Good humour reigned, partly because this short period constituted to the younger men their annual holiday, to the elder an escape from wives and families, partly because to all of them it was a masquerade. The whole of the youth of a county were playing at being soldiers...(3)

Not all of the problems of the yeomanry can directly be attributed to indiscipline or laxness, for it is unlikely that keen soldiers were found only in the Surrey Yeomanry. The yeomanry suffered from the struggle over the future of cavalry.(4) One officer complained that 'Every faddist in turn' had inflicted their pet ideas on the long suffering yeomanry. (5) Time available for training was necessarily limited for all auxiliaries, and the training of a horsed unit

(1) H.D. Meyers, KRS Q; letter, 13 Sept. 1914, S. Blagg papers, PP/MCR/220, IWM.

(2) Bridge, pp.418-19. See also W.G. Knox, 'Yeoman Hopkins: An Asset in our Armour', Nineteenth Century, (Mar. 1911) pp.560-572.

(3) O. Sitwell, Great Morning (London, 1951) p.144.

(4) For details of this debate, see Badsey, passim and E.M. Spiers, 'The British Cavalry 1902-14', JSAHR, LVII, No.230, pp.71-79.

(5) Sir. L. Rolleston, 'The training of the Territorial Force. A - Mounted Brigades', AR II, No.1, (1912) p.504.

in an urban area had obvious inherent difficulties which were exacerbated by the fall in the horse population of Britain by 11 per cent between 1904 and 1910, making it more difficult to obtain horses for training.(1)

The persistent absenteeism from which most auxiliary units suffered was not wholly attributable to indiscipline. Poorer men could not always afford to attend all of the annual camp, and many employers were reluctant to give Territorials time off from work. The annual camp gave auxiliary soldiers very little grasp of the more unpleasant sides of soldiering. At camp, yeomen could pool their resources to hire servants to clean their saddlery and equipment. After a parade and stables in the morning, afternoons were free for leisure pursuits, the evenings being spent drinking and chasing women.(2) In May 1909 a soldier of the East Kent Yeomanry wrote that the old, carefree days had passed and now 'our fortnight of Annual Training is not the time for display and recreation, but the time to continue and complete our training...' No doubt the writer was sincere, but a glance at the regiment's training schedule for 1909 reveals that training had to compete with numerous other commitments, including no less than ten entertainments provided by the Borough of Margate, for a slice of those precious fifteen days. (3) The problem was insuperable: camp constituted for many men their annual holiday. To have significantly reduced the time allotted to recreation would probably have resulted in fewer men attending camp and efficiency would have declined even further.

In sum it seems that much of the criticism of the standard of auxiliary training was justified, and some of the problems resulted from indiscipline.

(1) 'The Scarcity of Horses in the British Empire', CJ, 6, No. 24, pp.472-84.

(2) Hatton, p.22; A.S. Hamilton, The City of London Yeomanry (Roughriders) (London, 1930) p.4.

(3) EKY, 4, No.2, May 1909 pp.17, 23.



However, to have imposed tighter discipline would have been counterproductive.

The ultimate test of Territorial efficiency came on the Western Front in 1914-15 where TF units performed surprisingly well. Their discipline, although very different from that of Regular units, was sufficient to withstand the strains of industrialised, attritional warfare.

2.7 Contemporary Debates on Discipline

Having examined officer-man relations and discipline in both the Regular and Auxiliary forces, it is necessary to examine the debate on these topics that raged in the Edwardian army. In common with other European armies, many British officers believed that the offensive could succeed in the face of the increased destructiveness of modern weaponry if the morale of the assaulting troops was sufficiently high.(1) According to Travers, 'many' officers conflated this view with that of another 'vague camp' which emphasised increased discipline, producing a demand for a well-trained and highly motivated soldier with high degree of self-discipline.(2) In effect, what was being called for was an army composed of 'thinking bayonets', full of initiative, who were also well-disciplined.(3) As we have seen, the process of training and the hierarchical structure of the army was likely to fulfil the first criterion, but not the second, for as one officer was later to write Regulars 'were highly trained and well disciplined, but initiative in the ranks was discouraged and had been drilled out of them' (4) This

(1) M. Howard, 'Men Against Fire: The Doctrine of the Offensive in 1914', in P. Paret (ed). The Makers of Modern Strategy (Oxford, 1986) p.522.

(2) T. Travers, The Killing Ground (London, 1987) p.47.

(3) This debate has echoes in earlier periods. See D. Gates, The British Light Infantry Arm c. 1790-1815 (London, 1987) and P. Griffith, Military Thought in the French army, 1815-51 (Manchester, 1989).

(4) Letter, 27 Mar. 1926, A.F. Duguid to Edmonds, CAB 45/155, PRO.

dichotomy between desired results and the realities of army life fuelled a lively debate, which, however, has hitherto been largely neglected by historians.

The most prominent contributor to the debate was the foremost British military intellectual of the day, Col. G.F.R. Henderson, Professor of Military Art and History at the Staff College from 1892 to 1899. (1) Henderson argued that the ranks of the armies of the American Civil War were filled with men, many of whom were of high intelligence, who did not take easily to formal discipline. They would willingly follow men who had proved themselves or who they liked, but proved resistant to 'military etiquette' in such matters as familiarity between officers and men. They were 'thinking bayonets', in sharp contrast to the armies of Europe (although Henderson was usually content to leave this point implicit). (2)

Henderson was careful to point out the shortcomings of the lack of discipline in these armies, but he stressed that successful generals recognised the nature of their armies and adapted their methods of command and leadership accordingly. (3) 'Stonewall' Jackson recognised that 'his citizen soldiers were utterly unfamiliar with the forms and customs of military life' and thus with his troops 'tact, rather than the strict enforcement of the regulations, was the key-note of command', although offenders were harshly punished. (4)

Henderson saw the handling of Civil War armies as directly relevant to the

(1) On Henderson and his influence, see Lord Roberts, 'Memoir' in G.F.R. Henderson, (N. Malcolm, ed). The Science of War (London, 1906) pp. XIV-XXXVIII; J. Luvaas, The Education of an Army (London 1964) pp.216-247.

(2) G.F.R. Henderson, Stonewall Jackson and the American Civil War (London, 1898) II, p. 417, 429, 431, 455; Henderson, Science pp. 191, 208, 243.

(3) Henderson, Science pp.191-96, 244, 311; Henderson, Stonewall Jackson II, pp. 438-42.

(4) Henderson, Stonewall Jackson II, pp. 431, 448- 52; Henderson, Science p.243.

Volunteer movement, of which he was a supporter. (1) In 1894, he suggested that one day Britain might raise a large army composed 'at least in part' of temporary civilian volunteers, and the

habits and prejudices of civil life will have to be considered in their discipline and instruction, and officers will have to recognise that troops without the traditions, instincts, and training of regular soldiers, require a handling different from that which they have been accustomed to employ.

An understanding that conventional discipline was inappropriate for citizen volunteers was 'one of the most important lessons to be learned from the American War by English soldiers'. (2)

Henderson was unusual among Regular officers in suggesting that there might be some merits in coming to terms with auxiliary discipline, rather than simply bemoaning it, and far-sighted in his suggestion that this might have some relevance to a future mass volunteer army. Indeed, in a discussion of 'The tactical methods of handling partially trained troops' at a General Staff Conference in 1909, J.E. Edmonds, one of Henderson's former students, denied that the greater intelligence of wartime volunteers would 'make a very great difference, when we actually get into its zone of fire' and thus dense formations would be needed to harness the energies of troops which lacked the lengthy training of the Regulars. Haig and Rawlinson were both present at this discussion. Possibly one can trace the genesis of the disastrous tactics of 1 July 1916 to the failure to assimilate Henderson's enlightened views.(3)

In the 1890s Henderson held largely conventional views about the discipline

(1) Luvaas, p.218.

(2) Henderson, Science of War p.310.

(3) 'Report of a Conference of General Staff Officers at the Staff College' (1909) p.9, SCL.

of Regular troops. (1) As a result of the initially poor performance of the army in the Boer War he paid more attention to this subject. In an article written in 1903, published in a widely read volume in 1906, Henderson drew a useful comparison between 'mechanical' and 'intelligent' discipline. The latter was compared to
a pack of well trained hounds, running in no order, but without a straggler, each making good use of his instinct, and following the same object with the same relentless perseverance.

Henderson believed that the army of 1899 had relied on 'mechanical' rather than 'intelligent' discipline, but under the conditions of modern warfare this was inadequate. Instead the soldier had to use his initiative. (2) Henderson did not take his argument to its logical conclusion by attacking the nature of the disciplinary regime in the army, although he did admit that 'Monotony and routine' were part and parcel of soldiering, but were 'certain, if unrelieved, to deaden ambition and to contract the intellect...'. He also criticised the lack of educational opportunities for officers and of training facilities. (3)

The views expressed in Henderson's 1903 article represent the development of previous ideas. It is possible, if he had lived beyond that year, that his ideas would have developed further as a result of the debate on discipline conducted within the army in the decade before the outbreak of the First World War. As it was, Henderson's views were important because he was the the most influential military intellectual of the period. Furthermore, in 1914 many officers faced just the situation that Henderson had predicted twenty years earlier, when they were placed in command of untrained but enthusiastic civilian volunteers, unused to military discipline.

Other Regular soldiers were thinking along similar lines and some exceeded

(1) Henderson, Stonewall Jackson II, pp.444; 445-47, but see his views on Wellington's Light Division in Science pp.200-201.

(2) Henderson, Science pp.410, 412.

(3) Ibid p.393-95.

Henderson in the radicalism of their approach to the question. Another prominent military thinker, Sir J.F. Maurice, in an article of 1901 called for training that would produce thinking, individualistic 'light infantry'.(1) At a much more junior level, Lt. E.L. Spiers (11th Hussars) became dissatisfied with the 'insufferably dull routine' of training, and tested some new schemes on his troop. Spiers deliberately strove to make these interesting for his men, and was careful to take time explain them. (2) The Colonel Commandant of the Royal Engineers, General Sir Richard Harrison, put forward some ideas not dissimilar to Spiers'. In a lecture in 1906 Harrison argued for a greater degree of management skills. Recruits should be taught to work 'in an intelligent and methodical manner'; other ranks should not be treated as if they were stupid; training should be made more interesting; generally, the lot of the men should be improved, both by the provision of amusements and by preventing the men from being 'humbled about'.(3)

Officers such as these were critical of the system of training and discipline which they saw as working against the ultimate objective of producing a resourceful, individualistic soldier. However, the nature of the officer-man relationship itself received little attention. Discussions on this subject tended to focus on the practical side of paternalism, as in Baden-Powell's 1906 article on 'manmastership', which discussed such matters as the hygiene and diet of the soldier, although a brief paragraph acknowledged that concern for the character of the soldier was also part of the officer's duty.(4) Harrison's lecture, while touching on relevant matters, did not go into details on the subject of the officer-man relationship, while Henderson subscribed to a

(1) Sir J.F. Maurice, 'The Army Corps Scheme and Mr Dawkins's Committee', Nineteenth Century, (July, 1901) pp.145, 148.

(2) E. Spears, The Picnic Basket (London, 1974) p.73.

(3) Sir. R. Harrison, 'Thoughts on the Organisation of the British Army', JRUSI L, No. 335, (1906) pp.17-23.

(4) 'The Inspector of Cavalry', 'Manmastership', CJ, I, No.4, (1906) pp. 410-21.

romanticised image of the relationship, particularly in regard to the role of the NCO. (1) Those officers who had radical views on discipline seem to have in general shared the opinion of Maurice, that the officer-man relationship was

the most organic relationship - that is, the one in which each class best understands what the nature of the relationship is - and the most cordial, hearty and friendly existing between an upper class and a lower class anywhere in Europe.(2)

This view was by no means wholly erroneous, for the relationship was both 'organic' and 'cordial', yet this rosy view was strangely at odds with the perspective of the other ranks.

It can be argued that it was a futile exercise to attempt to inculcate initiative among the ranks without altering the basis of the relationship between the officers and men. It was difficult in the extreme to graft a system of devolved control (or Auftragstaktik) onto a rigidly hierarchical army whose other ranks were regarded and treated as little more than as cogs in a machine, or, to change the analogy, as children who had to be spoonfed by their officers. While some officers were prepared to criticise discipline and training, few were prepared to publicly challenge an equally vital and directly related topic, the nature of the officer-man relationship.

Despite the paucity of public debate on the inter-rank relationship, some officers' attitudes to their men were undergoing change on the eve of the Great War. This was, in part, a pragmatic response to recruiting problems. (3) In early 1914, treatment of recruits was recognised as a factor that affected recruiting and tactful handling of recruits was urged, without, it must be said,

(1) Henderson, Science pp.392-93.

(2) Maurice, p.148. This paragraph had originally been written in the 1870s when officer-man relations were rather more distant than in Edwardian times.

(3) See 'Colonel', 'How to Get Recruits', USM XXIX, No.909 (1909) pp.611-19.

much discernable effect.(1)

There is also evidence of a greater willingness to trust soldiers with responsibility. Most strikingly, in 1909-10 first senior officers and then the Army Council accepted the need, however reluctantly, to overcome the shortage of officers by commissioning selected NCOs upon mobilisation.(2) Even before the outbreak of war, in 1914 it was planned to commission as many as 50 NCOs although French, the CIGS, was opposed to ^{Mass} promotions from the ranks on the pattern of the French army, since this would upset the 'exceptionally happy' officer-man relationship.(3)

This shift in opinion can also be detected in the pages of the Soldier's Small Book, issued to every ranker. The 1905 edition contained three and a half pages headed 'OBEDIENCE IS THE FIRST DUTY OF THE SOLDIER'. This section set out in graphic detail the various punishments for disobedience, including death. It is perhaps significant that most of this material is omitted from the 1909 edition of this book.(4)

There are also indications of changing attitudes at regimental level. Lt. Col. The Hon. G.H. Morris (1/Irish Gds), who had a reputation as a radical, in a 'revolutionary step', set up a weekly consultative meeting with the other ranks on welfare and similar issues, along the line of the Indian darbar (see below).(5) The regimental historian of the King's Own discerned a considerable

(1) Minutes of 'Recruiting Conference', 5 May 1914, pp.8, 11, 19, WO 106/364, PRO. See also Capt. C. Bonham-Carter, 'Suggestions to Instructors of Recruits', AR VII, No.1, (1914) pp.119-27.

(2) 'Report of the Committee on Supply of Officers on Mobilization, 21 Oct. 1909', Precis No.453 and 122nd Meeting of Army Council, 21 Mar. 1910, both in WO 163/15, PRO. For further analysis of this question see E.M. Spiers, Haldane: An Army Reformer (Edinburgh, 1980), pp.141-42 and J. James, The Paladins (London, 1990) p.112.

(3) Minute by CIGS, 6 Mar. 1914, and terms of reference of report, WO 32/8386, PRO.

(4) Soldier's Small Books of G.A. Balaam and V.G. Ellis, ERM.

(5) T.R. Walrond to Lord Milner, 23 Mar. 1914, in Beckett, Curragh Incident p.277; P. Verney, The Micks (London, 1973 edn.) p.28.

change in attitudes in this period. The extension of the franchise had given some rankers the vote, and on polling day the regiment provided four motor cars to take soldiers to the polling station. In 1913 each company of 1/King's Own sent a representative to a messing committee, chaired by the sergeant-major, while four years earlier well-behaved men were given the privilege of walking out in civilian dress.(1) These concessions were trivial enough in themselves, but do appear to mark an increasing acceptance that the ranker was capable of behaving responsibly.

On occasions, the officer-man relationship involved a measure of consultation and even democracy. In 1903 the War Office proposed to extend the length of service in the footguards. The regimental adjutant of the Scots Gds. ordered that officers should obtain 'as far as possible the individual or prevailing opinion' on this subject. The CO of 3/Scots Gds. outlined the scheme to senior NCOs, told them to ascertain the opinion of the men in the following week and report back. The CO personally interviewed 40 men who were most directly affected by the proposals.(2) A similar process took place in 2/Coldm. Gds. in 1903 when Col. Ivor Maxse asked the men whether they were prepared to forego two days pay in order to have the use of a miniature rifle range. The men were given 15 minutes in which 'they could regard themselves as a republic and talk the matter over' and at the end of that time a vote would be taken - which produced a unanimous 'yes'.(3) One may question whether the other ranks were truly free to express their own opinions but the mere fact that officers were prepared to go through the motions of consultation indicates that attitudes towards discipline and the officer-man relationship were somewhat more complex than has sometimes been assumed.

(1) L. Cowper, (ed.) The King's Own - The Story of a Royal Regiment, II, (Oxford, 1939) p.304. This innovation would have pleased one ex-sergeant; Edmondson, pp.92-93.

(2) 'Extension of Service of the Footguards 1903-04', WO 32/6901, PRO.

(3) J. Hall, The Coldstream Guards 1885-1914 (Oxford, 1920) pp.313-4.

2.8 A Case Study: Major Philip Howell and the 4th Hussars

This chapter will conclude with an examination of one officer's views on discipline and officer-man relations, and the way in which he put his ideas into practice at regimental level. At the time of his death in 1916 Brig. Gen. Philip Howell (GS01, II Corps) was widely regarded as one of the rising stars of the army. (1) He served with the Guides in India and entered Quetta in 1905. Howell then took a series of staff posts and in 1913 he transferred into the 4th Hussars as major and second in command. (2) Although his close, if not uncritical association with Haig would appear to mark him down as a conventional officer, (3) Howell was far from being the archetypical cavalryman. He was a keen student of his profession and had political views of a liberal character. (4) As an Indian army officer he was a relative outsider to the British military establishment. This position allowed him to take a reasonably detached view of the British army, and to come to some radical conclusions about officer-man relations and discipline.

There are indications that Howell was thinking along radical lines on these topics as early as 1908, (5) but his appointment as second-in-command of the 4th Hussars in 1913 was a turning point. Howell brought to the 4th Hussars experience of the silladar system in use in many Indian cavalry regiments where

(1) Letter, 27 July 1931, F.P. Horsworthy, CAB 45/134, PRO; B.H. Liddell Hart, 'Impressions of the Great British Offensive on the Somme', p.58, CAB 45/135, PRO.

(2) Biographical details have been drawn from [R. Howell], Philip Howell: A Memoir by his Wife (London, 1942) and Beckett, Curragh Incident p.428.

(3) Memo. from Haig, 12 Feb. 1906, P. Howell papers, IV/C/2/2, LHCMA; Haig to Howell, 8 Mar. 1907, P. Howell papers IV/C/2/17, LHCMA; Howell, Philip Howell p.4.

(4) B. Bond, The Victorian Army and the Staff College 1854-1914 (London, 1972) p.285; Howell, Philip Howell p.42; Howell to C Wigram, 22 Mar. 1914, in Beckett, Curragh Incident, p.104.

(5) 'Some Notes for Mr Asquith', nd (but 1908) P. Howell papers, IV/C/2/43, LHCMA.

rankers, who tended to be high caste, were in the position of a contractor, rather than a mere hireling.(1) Such units made effective use of self-discipline. In the Guides, a darbar or 'open court' was held twice a week, at which the men could air grievances and raise matters relating to welfare.

(2)

Howell painted a grim picture of life in the 4th Hussars:

Shortage of strength means more frequent fatigues...excessive youth [of soldiers] means much elementary work, more boredom and more mistakes: boredom and mistakes lead to punishments: and punishments to desertions and unpopularity of recruiting (sic) - and so round and round we go.(3)

Howell considered that modified discipline and officer-man relations would produced a more contented soldiery, who would work more efficiently, and this would lead to a more professional army. For example, he regarded the military obsession for cleaning as a symptom of a concern for 'outward appearances', which, in his wife's words, 'torment the soldier without increasing his efficiency'.(4) Howell was no less critical of the liberal use of punishments in the regiment, making clear that he would look with favour on the sergeant who produced the shortest, rather than the longest, list of defaulters. In a similar vein, he would attempt to seek the root cause of indiscipline, rather than simply punish it. On one occasion, tired of punishing a man, Howell wrote to the parents of one young private, a persistent defaulter, and then gave him home leave: he returned a changed man. (5) Howell came to see that reforms were necessary if the best was to be made of the human material. He attempted to make his subordinates lead rather than drive the men, and to improve

(1) Heathcote, Indian Army pp.39-40; Mason, Matter of Honour pp.376-77.

(2) G.J. Younghusband, The Story of the Guides (London,1908) p.194. For a description of a darbar, see F. Yeats -Brown, Bengal Lancer (London, 1984 edn.) pp.22-26.

(3) Draft of letter, 16 Dec. 1913, P. Howell papers, IV/C/2/41, LHCMA.

(4) Draft of letter, 16 Dec. 1913, P.Howell papers, IV/C/2/41, LHCMA; Howell, Philip Howell p.47.

(5) Ibid pp.45-47.

training techniques, believing that men could only learn when in a receptive frame of mind, which was dispelled by 'cursing, swearing and noise. A man becomes either frightened or surly'. Howell, supported by his likeminded CO, Lt. Col. Ian Hogg, does seem to have brought a more enlightened disciplinary system to 4th Hussars, although some of his ideas were not well received by the men - a suggestion box remained empty, a reminder of the innate conservatism (and desire for self-preservation) of the Regular ranker.(1)

Howell's aims and methods discussed thus so far would have won the approval of many thinking officers. However, Howell extended the argument over discipline by concluding that if independent action should cease to be the prerogative of the officer, the officer class should be recruited by merit rather than by social status. At least as early as 1908 Howell had come to believe that officers should be recruited from men of natural authority, regardless of class. Education and training, Howell believed, could supply the army with suitable leaders.(2)

The Curragh Incident led to calls, mainly from the political Left, for a 'democratic' army: this notion appealed to Howell. In a letter to Ramsay Macdonald, he argued that the interests of army officers and Labour leaders coincided. Political impartiality and military efficiency could be helped by 'a sound system' of promotion of rankers. 'A stratum of rankers of the right sort would soon break down prejudices & make itself felt'. The main problem Howell foresaw was not opposition to the scheme but the low quality of the ordinary ranker, which Howell blamed on the lack of career prospects.(3)

(1) Ibid pp.45, 47. See also draft of letter, 16 December 1913, P. Howell papers, IV/C/2/41, LHCMA

(2) 'Some Notes for Mr Asquith', nd (but 1908) P. Howell papers, IV/C/2/43, LHCMA.

(3) Howell to Macdonald, 3 Apr. 1914, J.R. Macdonald papers, PRO 30/69/1158, PRO. See also Macdonald's reply, 17 Apr. 1914, P. Howell papers, IV/C/2/53, LCHMA.

In April 1914 the possibility of democratising the officer class appeared remote. Within twelve months, under the pressure of war, the army had begun the wholesale commissioning of men drawn from the lower reaches of British society. Howell's predictions were vindicated. Army officers and military authorities pragmatically accepted as officers men from a far humbler social background than the average prewar officer and gave them appropriate training. Howell's fears concerning the poor quality of the available material proved largely unfounded because considerable numbers of high calibre wartime volunteers and conscripts, who would never had joined the prewar army, provided the army with an excellent source of officers.

2.9 Conclusion to Chapters 1 and 2

Two distinct 'strands' of discipline and officer-man relations co-existed in the prewar British army. The Regular version was characterised by a rigidly hierarchical approach, reliance on 'imposed' discipline, and distant although mutually respectful relations between officers and men. Auxiliary discipline was, by contrast, much looser, with greater emphasis being placed on self-discipline, and inter-rank relations were characterised by informality. Both of these strands contributed to the disciplinary system and officer-man relationship of the army of 1914-18.

The paternalistic ethos of the prewar Regular officer infused the wartime officer class and was, it will be argued, a crucial factor in maintaining the morale of the British soldier in the First World War. The disciplinary structure of the prewar Regular army was used, for the most part, in the mass army of 1914-18, inhibiting the development of the independently-minded soldier called for by many of the protagonists in the prewar debate on discipline.

However, the relationship between the officer and soldier in the wartime army

came to resemble that which had existed in prewar Territorial rather than Regular units, and many TF units maintained their prewar disciplinary code until late into the war. A similar code was adopted by the commanders of some New Army units, following, consciously or not, Henderson's advice on the lessons of the American Civil War.

Thus, it will be argued, there was much continuity between the officer-man relationship and disciplinary system in the wartime British army and its Edwardian predecessor. While little was new, most wartime units took elements from both the Regular and auxiliary traditions, in varying proportions depending on the unit, to create a style of officer-man relations and discipline which showed traits inherited from both parents.

Chapter 3

The British Army and Morale in the Era of the Great War

The subject of officer-man relations and discipline is inextricably bound up with that of morale. This chapter will establish a framework for the discussion of these subjects by defining morale, examining the attitude of the prewar army to morale, and analysing means of assessing morale. The chapter concludes with an overview of the morale of the BEF from 1914 to 1918.

3.1 Definitions of Morale

'Morale' is an imprecise term. An official study of the subject by Lt. Col. Sparrow defined morale as 'the attitude of a soldier towards his employment'. He argued that although it is legitimate to speak of 'good' and 'bad' morale, it is often used 'as more or less the equivalent of 'keenness', and 'morale' is not necessarily synonymous with 'fighting spirit'. (1) Questions of morale affect non-combatant troops and civilians as well as front line soldiers. A different and rather more complex definition was given by T.T. Paterson in 1955. He defined morale as 'obedience to an internal, personalised authority' which emerged from

an ideal or value common to the group, the end sought by the group being defined by the ideal or value. Furthermore, action in obedience to the sense of duty is essentially one of service in a role for furtherance of the aim of the group in achieving its goal. (2)

The first definition is of individual morale, the second of group morale, or group cohesion. Irvin L. Child's definition is simpler and briefer, and links the two: 'morale pertains to [the individual's] efforts to enhance the effectiveness of the group in accomplishing the task in hand.' (3)

(1) J.H. Sparrow, The Second World War 1939-45 Army: Morale (HMSO, 1949) pp.1-2.

(2) T.T. Paterson, Morale in War and Work (London, 1955) p.99.

(3) Quoted in I. McLaine, Ministry of Morale (London, 1979) p.8.

Taking all these definitions into account, the relationship between individual and group morale can be described as follows: unless the individual is reasonably content he will not willingly contribute to the unit. He might desert or mutiny, but he is more likely simply to refuse to work wholeheartedly towards the goals of the group. High group morale, or cohesion, is the product of a high state of morale existing among the individual members of that unit; and the state of morale of a higher formation such as an army is the product of the cohesion of the units which compose that army. The possession of individual morale sufficiently high that a soldier is willing to go into battle might be described as positive 'combat motivation' or 'fighting spirit'.

3.2 Clausewitz and British Army Morale

The work of Carl von Clausewitz gives a valuable insight into the nature of collective military morale. He differentiated between professional armies, which have 'military virtues' such as discipline, experience, and military skill, and irregular, non-professional armies which possess 'bravery, adaptability, stamina and enthusiasm'. Clausewitz divided morale into two components: 'mood' and 'spirit', and warned that one 'should take care never to confuse the real spirit of an army with its mood'. An army which has 'true military spirit' is one that 'maintains its cohesion under the most murderous fire' and in defeat, resists fears, both real and imaginary. Military spirit, Clausewitz argued, is created in two ways, by the waging of victorious wars and by the testing of an army to the very limits of its strength; 'the seed will grow only in the soil of constant activity and exertion, warmed by the sun of victory.' (1)

(1) C. von Clausewitz, (M. Howard and P. Paret, eds.) On War (Princeton, NJ, 1976) pp.187-89.

Clausewitz's analysis can be applied to individual as well as collective morale. The mood of an individual soldier could be affected by such mundane factors as the weather and availability of food. The mood of a soldier might fluctuate from day to day or even from minute to minute. A private of 7/Buffs noted in 1916 that the spirits of the troops were depressed by rain but recovered 'as soon as the fine weather comes', while another ranker commented that 'nothing changed one's spirits from buoyancy to utter despondency or vice-versa quicker than a shortage or surfeit of rations'.(1) If the mood of soldiers was transient and subject to frequent change, 'military spirit' or 'fighting spirit' was concerned with the ultimate willingness of individuals or groups to engage in combat. As will be demonstrated below, it was perfectly possible for a soldier's mood to be poor but his military spirit to be sound. Therefore, in arguing that the morale of the BEF remained fundamentally sound throughout the war, it is not being suggested that soldiers were ecstatically happy all the time. Rather, British soldiers and units remained committed to fighting and winning the war, and this was reflected in their combat performance.

It is, of course, always possible to find examples of groups or individuals who, at a given time, lacked the willingness to fight. In March 1918 some members of 1/Gordons were found to be drunk and indisciplined on a day on which the enemy advanced close to the battalion's position.(2) The rout of an Irish battalion on the Somme in September 1916, or the 'bolting' of 9/Cheshires on 24 March 1918 provide even more dramatic evidence of the failure of the military spirit of specific units at specific times. However cases such as these were

(1) Unpublished account, p.52, R.Cude papers, IWM; [A. Smith] Four Years on the Western Front (London, 1987 edn.) p.100.

(2) Lt. D.D.A. Lockhart, ts account in WD, 1/Gordons, WO 95/1435, PRO.

exceptional: 9/Cheshires, for example, fought effectively a month later.(1) While the battles of the BEF were not always crowned by success, and symptoms of poor morale were discernable at various times, the performance of British troops on the Western Front was rarely less than dogged. The BEF's mood fluctuated but its spirit remained unbroken.

Clausewitz's analysis is particularly relevant to the British army of 1914-18 in other ways. The BEF is a prime example of a largely non-professional army which endured tremendous hardships and continued to fight effectively in a sustained conflict. In addition Clausewitzian theory, or at least a bastardised version of it, coloured British perceptions of morale during the era of the Great War. Clausewitz's ideas were disseminated throughout the army via the Staff Colleges at Camberley and Quetta, through the medium of enthusiasts such as Capper and Henderson,(2) and through popular interpretations.(3) Whether Clausewitz's own work was much read is rather doubtful.(4)

By about 1909 British officers had developed 'an unofficial cult of the offensive'(5) in which morale played an vital role. Morale was thus an important concept for the British army. Field Service Regulations of 1909 stated uncompromisingly that 'Success in war depends more on morale than on physical qualities'. Thus it was essential for the attacker to develop the 'moral qualities' deemed necessary to exhaust the enemy's morale as well as his physical fighting power. (6)

(1) Unpublished account, p.41, H.D. Pavriere papers, 81/19/1, IWM; 24 Mar. 1918, WD, 17/RF, WO 95/1363, PRO.

(2) K.R. Simpson, 'Capper and the Offensive Spirit', JRUSI 118, No.3, (1973) pp.51-56; Henderson, Science of War p.173.

(3) C.C. Anderson, The War Manual, I, (London, 1916) pp.33-34; S.L. Murray, The Reality of War - An Introduction to Clausewitz (London, 1909).

(4) See the comments of J.E. Edmonds in 'Report on a Conference of General Staff Officers at the Staff College' (1910), p.57, SCL.

(5) Travers, Killing Ground p.43.

(6) Field Service Regulations, Part 1, Operations, 1909 (reprinted with amendments 1914) pp.13, 138, 142. See also Travers, Killing Ground pp.37-82.

In contrast to some other European armies, the British did not have a formal doctrine of war. FSR of 1909 mentioned the 'fundamental principles of war' without stating what exactly these principles were. (1) Surprisingly little attention was paid to the teaching of the creation and sustenance of morale at Staff College, (2) or its development within the unit. While some in the army felt that more attention should be paid to this aspect of training, others were unsure of the wisdom giving lessons on morale to soldiers.(3)

The official booklet Infantry Training of 1914 mentioned the need to create a 'soldierly spirit' which would in turn bring moral values such as discipline, self-confidence and courage. It instructed that annual individual training should include lectures which aimed to develop 'a sense of personal honour, duty, patriotism and esprit de corps', although beyond suggesting instruction in military history and Imperial citizenship, the manual gave little indication how these laudable aims might be achieved.(4) By contrast, a British officer was favourably impressed with the instruction on morale given to French NCOs who were training to become officers, a subject 'we entirely omit from the curriculum of our cadet colleges'.(5)

3.3 Assessing Morale

The problems involved in attempting to assess the morale of a formation as large as the BEF are many and obvious. While the ideal solution would be to

(1) FSR, 1, 1909 pp.13-14; Simpson, 'Capper' pp.51-54.

(2) Spiers, 'The Regular Army' pp.44, 59; J. Connell, Wavell Soldier and Scholar (London, 1964) pp.62-3.

(3) Report of a Conference of General Staff Officers (1910) pp.74-6, SCL.

(4) Infantry Training (1914) p.2, 12.

(5) Maj. M. Earle, report on 'French system of training NCOs for Commissions', 3 Feb. 1914, WO 32/8386, PRO. For the development of British army citizenship education in relation to morale from 1917 onwards, see MacKenzie, Politics.

assemble a whole series of case studies of individual units in order to build up an overall picture, enough evidence does exist to draw some tentative general conclusions about the morale of the BEF at certain points during the war. For the period before 1916, the materials are scanty, although J. Brent Wilson (1) in his important study analysed the morale of certain formations throughout the war using the criteria by which high command judged morale. It is not intended to duplicate Wilson's work here. A brief section will be devoted to 1914-15, in which Wilson's work on the period will be summarised and supplemented by some other material. Then some official reports on postal censorship for 1916-18 (which were not available to Wilson) will be used as the basis of a study of the morale of the BEF in the second half of the war.

Although British high command had a strong belief in the importance of moral factors in war, and used an attritional strategy which had the explicit aim of destroying enemy morale, no organisation devoted to centralised planning, direction, monitoring and sustaining of the morale of the BEF existed during the Great War. This is in sharp contrast to the practice of the US and French armies.(2)

The British army's relatively casual approach to monitoring its men's morale can be ascribed to three main factors. The first is a general belief among senior British officers that the morale of their men was fundamentally sound, and likely to remain so; in Lloyd George's jaundiced words, generals assumed that 'Allied soldiers were infrangible steel, and enemy soldiers ordinary flesh'. (3) This attitude was rooted in, among other factors, a belief in the

(1) Wilson, 'Morale and Discipline'.

(2) T.M. Camfield, '"Will to Win" - The U.S. Army Troop Morale Program of World War I', MA XLI, No.3, (1977) p.125; D. Englander, 'The French Soldier, 1914-18', FH, 1, No.1 (1987) pp.50-1; E.L. Spears, Prelude to Victory (London, 1939) p.102-3.

(3) D. Lloyd George, War Memoirs (London, 1938 edn.) I, p. 825.

'character' of the British soldier. It is also likely that high command had confidence in the traditional paternalism of the officer corps, and the practical measures taken by the army to sustain morale.(1) Finally, the British regimental system inhibited the establishment of a centralised body concerned with morale. As late as 1940, senior military personnel resisted the establishment of an Army Welfare Scheme and the use of local welfare officers that operated outside the unit, on the grounds that the welfare of the soldier was the responsibility of the regimental officer.(2) It is entirely typical of the British army's casual approach to morale that a campaign to mould the opinions of the soldiers of the BEF by a programme of education sprang from the initiative of individual staff officers, and was only implemented in 1918, the last year of the war. This was a response to a perceived deterioration in morale.(3) It is arguable that it might have been more sensible to introduce such a scheme earlier, to prevent morale declining in the first place.

This is not to say that British high command took no interest in the morale of their troops, rather that information on morale that was received by the generals was not always reliable and some, but not all, was gathered in a haphazard and unsystematic fashion. Wilson has argued that high command attempted to ascertain the state of morale and discipline in units by the collection of quantitative data, especially figures for courts martial for

(1) T. Bogacz, 'War Neurosis and Cultural Change in England, 1914-22; The Work of the War Office Committee of Enquiry into 'Shell-Shock'', JCH 24, No. 2, pp.230-1, 237-8; Wilson, 'Morale and Discipline' p.18.

(2) M.C. Morgan, The Second World War 1939-1945 Army: Army Welfare (London, 1953) p.1.

(3) S.P. MacKenzie, 'Morale and the Cause: The Campaign to Shape the Outlook of Soldiers of the British Expeditionary Force, 1914-18', CJH XXV, (1990) pp.218, 221-22, 224-28. This article includes a useful summary of the BEF's morale which draws upon unpublished censorship reports.

offences such as drunkenness, looting, and desertion, and statistics for trench foot and shellshock. Wilson concluded that these indices were, on the whole, 'unreliable'.(1) There was a tendency to confuse morale with discipline. In reality well disciplined troops do not necessarily have high morale: men serving sentences in military prisons are well disciplined, but unlikely to have high morale. (2) Secondly, as will be demonstrated in a later chapter, not all regimental officers attempted to apply prewar standards of discipline to their troops, who were mere civilians in uniform. In some Territorial, Kitchener and Dominion battalions, failure to salute might have indicated neither slack discipline nor low morale. Applying criteria such as propensity to salute to the whole army was an inaccurate way of judging the fighting efficiency of some units.

One quantitative method which should be treated with caution is the use of executions to judge morale in a unit. Men sentenced to death seem to have faced something of a lottery as to whether their sentence would be commuted, for only 11.23 per cent of death sentences were actually carried out.(3) The composition of the court martial, whether or not the accused was represented, the attitude of the accused's hierarchical superiors (from his battalion commander to the commander-in-chief); all these factors were important in deciding the fate of the individual.(4) The execution of malefactors, who were mainly convicted of desertion, was intended as a deterrent to others. The commanders of brigades in which condemned men served were required to furnish a report 'as to the state of discipline of the unit and his recommendations as to whether or not an example was necessary'.(5) More generally, the decision of the commander-in-chief, who

(1) Wilson, 'Morale and Discipline' p.311.

(2) Sparrow, p.2.

(3) Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire, 1914-22 (London, HMSO, 1922) p.649.

(4) Putkowski and Sykes, p.9.

(5) Childs, p.142.

had the ultimate authority to confirm or commute a death sentence, was in part influenced by 'the immediate needs of discipline', not necessarily that of the individual's battalion.(1) The case of Pte. C.W.T. Skilton (22/RF) who was executed in December 1916 for deserting during the fighting on the Ancre in November (2) illustrates the difficulties of generalising about the state of morale of a unit from the execution of an individual. The Battle of the Ancre was a severe trial for the British infantry, yet Skilton's battalion performed well during the battle. The 22/RF was characterised by an enlightened disciplinary regime, a high level of esprit de corps and excellent officer-man relations.(3) The evidence suggests that Skilton was a poor soldier who had been lucky to escape a court martial following his behaviour in an earlier battle. It was possible that he was shell-shocked.(4) In sum, Skilton was an atypical soldier and it would be unwise to generalise about the state of morale and discipline in his battalion from Skilton's fate.

Censorship of soldier's letters represented the most systematic, if far from perfect, method used by the BEF for gauging morale. Reports based on such censorship were submitted at regular intervals to GHQ and on occasions to the War Cabinet. Other, ad hoc methods, were also used. The war correspondent Philip Gibbs was interviewed in late 1917 by Lord Milner and later by a British liaison officer serving with the French who questioned Gibbs as to his opinions of the morale of the BEF in general, and specifically whether he believed the army would accept a compromise peace.(5) Another individual who advised the

(1) A. Babington, For the Sake of Example (London, 1983) pp.16-17, 18-19.

(2) 26 Dec. 1916, WD of 22/RF, WO 95/1372, PRO.

(3) Sheffield, 'Effect of War Service' passim.

(4) WO 93/49, PRO; H. Berrycloath, interview; H.E. Harvey, Battleline Narratives (London, 1928) pp.135, 157-8.

(5) P. Gibbs, The Pageant of the Years (London, 1946) p.210.

War Cabinet on British military morale was General Smuts, who submitted a report on his return from a tour of the Front in January 1918. (1)

More junior officers also had quantitative methods of gauging morale. The Brigade Major of XIV Corps heavy artillery 'learned to assess the morale of the infantry' by the number of complaints received from them of British shells dropping short. He believed that many of the reports of 'short-shooting' were 'entirely unreliable', and the better the morale of the infantry was, the less likely they were to issue false claims about the inaccuracy of the gunners.(2) In December 1917, the officers of 1/9 King's saw the willingness of troops to subscribe to War Savings Certificates as an indication of esprit de corps. The men were initially reluctant to part with their money, but became more enthusiastic when the scheme was presented as a means of increasing the prestige of the battalion, and in fact 1/9 King's raised more money than any other unit in their division. (3)

Quite apart from these 'statistical' means of establishing morale, officers used their experience and intuition to keep their finger on the pulse of ^{the} unit. Obvious signs of high morale were spontaneous humour and singing.(4) The subaltern soon learned that when marching men stopped singing and whistling they were growing weary, or approaching danger.(5) R.W.F Johnston, an officer of 16/R. Scots, drew a sharp contrast between the demeanour of the battalion before an action of 25/26 August 1917, and one fought two months later. Before the first, the men showed 'keenness', and a degree of esprit de corps. By the

(1) 'Memorandum of a visit to the Western Front by General Smuts', 27 Jan. 1918, GT 3469, CAB 24/40, PRO.

(2) Letter, 26 May 1934, J.H. Bateson, CAB 45/132, PRO.

(3) E.H.G. Roberts, The Story of the '9th King's' in France (Liverpool, 1922) p.94.

(4) W. Slim, Unofficial History (London, 1970 edn.) p.12.

(5) [M. Plowman] 'Mark VII', A Subaltern on the Somme (London, 1928) p.66.

22 October battle, the men were 'tired, dispirited and exhausted...without thought of victory'. During the latter action, logistic arrangements had broken down, leaving the men short of food. It is interesting that Johnston used the absence of 'jokes and singing in the ranks' as a criterion of low morale.(1) Contemporary advice for young officers laid heavy stress on the necessity for the officer to get to know his men (see chapter 5). While 'grousing' was not necessarily a sign of low morale, the good officer was able to sense when the morale of his men was low.(2)

What is the historian to make of these methods of assessing morale? Gauging morale is best regarded as an art rather than a science. The use of statistics is fraught with danger, while, conversely, the opinions of regimental and even staff officers (who mostly had recent regimental experience), however subjective, cannot be lightly set aside. As this thesis seeks to demonstrate, many British officers developed close relationships with their men which made them sensitive to changes in mood and spirit among the rank and file. Likewise, the views of other well-informed individuals are worthy of attention. Smuts had experience of commanding men in the field. Gibbs, who built up a close relationship with 8/10 Gordons, claimed that he had 'complete liberty' to visit all parts of the front, spoke to men in the front line and gained much knowledge of 'the spirit and personal experiences of the troops'.(3) Certainly, one unit recorded their satisfaction with Gibbs' account of a visit to them in July 1915.(4) Such evidence, along with that of censorship reports and ordinary soldiers, form the basis of the section that follows. Finally, it should not be forgotten that combat performance offers valuable evidence of morale, for troops

(1) Unpublished account, pp.75, 87-88, R.W.F Johnston papers, 82/38/1 IWM.

(2) E.L.M. Burns, General Mud (Toronto, 1970) p.63.

(3) Gibbs, Pageant p.201; Gibbs to Edmonds, 26 July 1930, CAB 45/134, PRO.

(4) O. Rutter (ed.), The History of the Seventh Service Battalion of the Royal Sussex Regiment 1914-19 (London, 1934) p.21.

that lack military spirit will not fight effectively.

3.4 The Morale of the British Expeditionary Force, 1914-18

The British official historians referred to the 'depression' experienced by the men in the front lines in the winter of 1914-15.(1) Wilson has argued that this depression was caused by a number of factors which included the harsh climatic conditions, the terrain, the primitive nature of the logistic infrastructure, poor quality of reinforcements for Regular units, and frustration with trench warfare. All these things were important, but most important of all, Wilson suggests, was the fact that the British army was not adequately prepared to conduct a campaign of static, trench warfare. The paucity of reserves and trench fighting equipment is symptomatic of the lack of material preparation, but the effort needed to adjust mentally to trench warfare was also of importance. However, Wilson concludes that this depression, although serious in the short term, was 'transitory in nature'. The offensive at Neuve Chapelle in March 1915 demonstrated that the BEF's will to combat had not been undermined.(2)

There is considerable evidence to suggest that the British military leadership did indeed regard the morale and discipline of the BEF with some concern in the winter of 1914-15. As early as 30 October 1914 a staff officer who had served with 7th Division delivered a lecture to the as yet unblooded 8th Division in which he warned that at Ypres the enemy had attempted to break the morale of the infantry by artillery fire. He also stressed the necessity of maintaining strict discipline, as did Rawlinson, who spoke after him.(3) In the same month, on

(1) J.E. Edmonds and G.C. Wynne, Military Operations, France and Belgium, 1915, I, (London, 1927) pp.2-3.

(2) Wilson, 'Morale and Discipline', pp.67-118.

(3) Lecture delivered by Brigadier-General R.A.K. Montgomery C.B. D.S.O. at the camp of the 8th Division near Winchester, on 30th October 1914 pp.5, 9, Dept. of Printed Books, IWM.

arrival at Le Havre soldiers were treated to 'a homily upon morale' by a 'gorgeous figure'. (1)

The need to make strenuous efforts to maintain the morale of the ordinary soldier was also well understood by the regimental officer. At the Staff College in 1938, an officer who had served with 2/R. Bde. gave a lecture on the upkeep of morale in the winter of 1914-15, which in itself indicates the importance attached to this subject. The practical steps which were taken by the officers of 2/R. Bde. ranged from the enforcement of strict discipline, to 'the provision of amusements in the form of organised games, sports, concerts, boxing and horse shows'. (2)

It is clear that the 'depression' of the winter of 1914-15 did not permanently erode the military spirit of the British soldier. Indeed, some contemporary observers were impressed by the fortitude of the other ranks. (3) Moreover, this period was not characterised by large-scale desertions or mutinies, or by ineffective performances in combat. In the spring of 1915, vigorous training was introduced to shake off what an officer of 4/Middlesex described as the 'slow habits' of the winter. (4) The battle of Neuve Chapelle, the first major British action of 1915, demonstrated that the BEF still possessed a considerable degree of offensive spirit. (5) In Clausewitzian terms, the mood of the BEF might have appeared depressed, but its military spirit remained intact.

(1) Anon, 'Around Armentieres and the Ypres Salient', Twenty Years After, Sup. Vol. (London, 1938) p.503.

(2) Col. M.G.N. Stopford M.C., 'Trench Warfare - General - Winter 1914-15' lecture to Junior Division, 1938, p.13, Conf. 3898, SCL.

(3) e.g. Diary, B.O. Dewes, 17, 21 Nov. 1914, 84/22/1, IWM.

(4) Diary, p.103, 18 Mar. 1915, T.S. Wollocombe, RMASL.

(5) Robertson, Private to Field Marshal pp.229-30.

A letter written by Pte. J. Allson in early 1915 perhaps offers a clue to the thinking of the Regular other rank in this period. Allson, a soldier with many years service, had escaped front line duty and was working in a base hospital; he may have been wounded. After noting his 'old mob KRR getting cut up (sic)' Allson opined that 'this war is going to be a very long one so I have settled my mind down to it...the southafrican (sic) war was not a patch on this one'. He went on to express a typical old soldier's grouse about the tardiness of the progress of Kitchener's Army towards the front. There are a number of interesting points about this letter. Allson had deliberately (and illegally) posted the letter through the civilian system, thus preventing an officer from censoring it, because, he said, one 'carnt Put anything in it [a letter] to much (sic)' if an officer was going to read it. In spite of the fact that his letter was not going to be read by anyone in the military hierarchy, Allson concluded with the words 'God save the King'.(1)

Allson's letter is evidence of a Regular private, albeit one who had temporarily escaped front-line duty, coming to terms with the previously unanticipated reality of a long, static war. He accepted the fact with a certain amount of fatalism and even patriotism, tempered by a grumble. His views are consistent with those of other prewar Regulars in this period. In his memoirs, Cpl. John Lucy (2/R. I. Rif.) wrote of the ebbing of his personal morale, and the stultifying effects of trench warfare on soldiers trained for mobile warfare, but his attitude to the war is summed up by the title of chapter 36: Life Goes On. (2) Likewise, in his memoir Pte. Frank Richards (2/RWF) referred in passing to the lowering of morale caused by the harsh conditions of the winter of 1914-15, but the general tenor of his book is of stoic acceptance

(1) Letter, 7 Jan. (?) 1915, J. Allson papers, 85/15/1, IWM.

(2) Lucy, pp.255, 267, 311-12.

of his lot.(1)

The morale of the BEF from the spring of 1915 to the eve of the Somme offensive has received little attention from historians. Wilson's conclusion, that there was an improvement in morale during 1915, and that spirits were generally high by June 1916 (2) is broadly correct but there is also some evidence of a recurrence of 'depression' among some troops during the winter of 1915-16. In a memorandum submitted to Asquith in November 1915, Robertson argued that 'depression at home is beginning to be reflected in the Army in France'.(3) This view was probably influenced by the reports on postal censorship received by high command. Although reports from this period have not survived, the report of Third Army Censor submitted in November 1916 states that a year earlier 'Letters containing prolonged grouching' had been 'fairly common'.(4) At the other end of the scale, a Territorial private who had served in France for almost year recorded in October 1915 that 'For the first time since the war began, I have heard soldiers say that that we are losing'. Although the writer retained his optimism, he believed the modest gains and heavy losses incurred at Loos in September had undermined morale: 'It gives one cold shivers to look at a map and see how far the Germans must be driven back'.(5) Philip Gibbs believed that the winter of 1915-16 was worse even than the winter of 1914-15 and the one that was to follow the Somme offensive, for the sacrifices of 1915 appeared to have achieved nothing.(6)

This feeling of depression does not appear to have been common to the entire

(1) F. Richards, Old Soldiers Never Die (London, 1965 edn.) pp.60, 97-98.

(2) Wilson, 'Morale and Discipline' pp.139, 157.

(3) W. Robertson, Soldiers and Statesmen 1914-1918, I (London, 1926) p.206.

(4) 'Report on Complaints, Moral etc' Nov. 1916, pp.3-4, M. Hardie papers, 84/46/1, IWM.

(5) Letter, 28 Oct. 1915, P.H. Jones papers, P.246, IWM.

(6) P. Gibbs, The Battles of the Somme (London, 1917) pp.14-15; P. Gibbs, The Realities of War (London, 1920) pp.169-70.

BEF. With the exception of a handful of formations that fought at Loos, few of the New Army units which had arrived in France by the early spring of 1916 had taken part in the battles of 1915. Their morale was generally high. It is also possible to find indications of high morale among troops who had been out in France for some time; a middle-class soldier of 1/21 Londons wrote in October 1915 that 'it is only a matter of time before they [the Germans] give in',⁽¹⁾ while Pte. Andrews, a professional man serving in a working-class unit, 1/4 BW, believed that the men's 'spirit...was still excellent' although men were less inclined to volunteer for 'dangerous duty' than formerly.⁽²⁾ The preparations for the Somme appear to have revived spirits in many units. The mood of some of the troops was temporarily depressed in the winter of 1915-16, but the BEF's military spirit remained essentially intact.

The Battle of the Somme was the largest single battle that had been fought by the British army up to that point. From July to November 1916 the Germans were pushed back about seven miles at the cost of 420,000 British casualties. ⁽³⁾ 57,000 casualties were incurred on the first day of the offensive alone. The German army remained undefeated. Yet in November 1916 a report on the morale of the Third Army based on the censorship of soldier's letters (the only such records from the period to survive) could report that 'the spirit of the men, their conception of duty, their Moral (sic), has never been higher than at the present moment'. Not surprisingly, Haig commented upon reading the report 'It is quite excellent'. Although Third Army did not play a major role in the battle after the initial stage, divisions from those Armies which bore the brunt of the fighting were sent to Third Army in the course of the offensive. Third Army's censorship report was complemented by those of other

(1) Letter, 26. Oct. 1915, G. Banks-Smith papers, LULLC.

(2) W.L. Andrews, The Haunting Years (London, nd) p.180.

(3) T. Wilson, The Myriad Faces of War (Cambridge, 1986) p.349.

Armies.(1)

Hardie's reports offer strong evidence of the reliability of soldier's letters as indicators of morale, and refute a recent suggestion that censors deliberately selected positive statements from soldiers' letters in order to produce falsely-optimistic reports for submission to high command.(2) Hardie was not a sycophant. His reports in the autumn of 1917, as will be shown, made no attempt to disguise symptoms of poor morale. In view of recent suggestions that official documents and some private papers were censored or falsified in an attempt to protect the reputations of senior commanders, it is noteworthy that these reports were retained in Hardie's private papers and only emerged in to the public domain in the 1980s.(3)

Many reasons have been given for the failure of the British attack on 1 July 1916, but poor morale is not usually one of them. Exceptionally, a staff officer of 32nd Division suggested that a factor in that formation's partial failure was physical and moral exhaustion caused by excessive digging and a poor system of reliefs.(4) There is general agreement that morale, in the sense of willingness to fight, was high on the eve of the Somme offensive.(5) Numerous reasons can be suggested for this. One gunner officer believed that the change of scenery, from the 'dreary, drab and depressing surroundings of Flanders to the open plains of the Somme' lifted the spirits of the men. Certainly, in the first half of 1916 the Somme was a less active sector than

(1) Censorship Report, Third Army (Nov. 1916) pp.6,12, and 'Summaries of Censorship Reports on General Conditions in British Forces in France', M. Hardie papers, 84/46/1, IWM.

(2) G. De Groot, Douglas Haig 1861-1928 (London, 1988) pp.235-36.

(3) D. Winter, Haig's Command (London, 1991) pp.303-15.

(4) Letter, 30 June 1930, A.C. Girdwood, CAB 45/134, PRO.

(5) See for example letter, 5 Sept. 1930, CAB 45/137, PRO (signature of writer illegible); W. Turner, Pals: The 11th (Service) Battalion (Accrington) East Lancashire Regiment (Barnsley, nd) pp.131-32.

the ever-dangerous Ypres Salient.(1) The obvious power and apparent effectiveness of the British guns also boosted confidence, leading to a widely-held belief, which filtered down from senior officers to the rank-and-file, that the bombardment of the German positions would ensure that the infantry's task would be an easy one, and that the forthcoming offensive would decide the war. (2)

According to John Keegan, the BEF of July 1916 was 'a trusting army'. (3) While there is a great deal of truth in this assertion, the extent to which the optimism of officers was shared by ordinary soldiers should not be exaggerated. It is instructive to compare an officer's recollections of Hunter-Weston's visit to 1/LF on 30 June with those of a private. The officer recalled that Hunter-Weston's optimism was 'naturally conveyed to my men, it gave us all good heart. In fact we thought that this must be the end of the war!!!' The private recalled 'the ugly mutterings in the ranks' during the general's talk, which told a rather different story.(4) The 1/LF were, of course, a Regular battalion with much experience of combat, which was perhaps less likely to be impressed than an inexperienced Kitchener unit.

Percy Jones, a soldier of a veteran TF battalion, 1/16 Londons, was also unimpressed by a senior officer's assurances that casualties in the assault on 1 July would be low because of the effectiveness of the British artillery. Facing the formidable German defences at Gommecourt, most of Jones's fellow rankers shared his scepticism about 'the carefully drawn up plans'. It is important to note that this cynicism did not undermine the willingness of the

(1) Letter, nd, CAB 45/134, PRO (signature of writer illegible).

(2) Letter, 6 Nov. 1929, C. Howard, CAB 45/134, PRO; M. Middlebrook, The First Day on the Somme (London, 1971) pp.96-97, 116.

(3) J. Keegan, The Face of Battle (London, 1978) pp.218-19.

(4) Letter, 12 Nov. 1929, J. Collis Browne, CAB 45/132, PRO; G. Ashurst, My Bit; A Lancashire Fusilier at War 1914-18 (Ramsbury, 1988) pp.95-96.

men of 1/16 Londons to fight. In two successive diary entries in late June 1916 Jones referred to the men's determination to go on 'until something stops us'. (1) During the week before the assault, only 7 out of 966 men of all ranks reported sick, 'a record', the battalion historian commented, 'rarely beaten in peace time, even under the most favourable conditions', which indicated high morale. (2) Using the most important test of morale of them all, both 1/LF and 1/16 Londons fought well on 1 July, even though both of their divisions' assaults ended in failure.

Many of the men who attacked on 1 July had never before taken part in a full-scale battle. In a letter of 7 July 1916, a private of 1/13 Londons, newly arrived from England, wryly recorded how his draft's unbridled enthusiasm, which provoked an amazed response from veteran soldiers, was quickly tempered after a few days in the trenches.(3) However, units, as opposed to individual soldiers, were not committed to action unbloodied. By July 1916 some New Army units had had as much as nine months experience of trench warfare, and on active service, inexperienced troops quickly learned how to survive. (4) To choose two regiments at random, of the 14 battalions of the Northumberland Fusiliers that served with Fourth Army on 1 July 1916, eight had arrived in France in January 1916, two in November 1915, one in July 1915, and three in September 1915, while of the five New Army and Territorial battalions of the Royal Fusiliers serving with Third and Fourth Armies on that date, three had arrived in January, one in

(1) Diary, 26, 27 June 1916, pp.220-22, P.H. Jones papers, P.246, IWM.

(2) J.Q. Henriques, The War History of the 1st Battalion Queen's Westminster Rifles 1914-1918 (London, 1923) p.84.

(3) Letter, 7 July 1916, P.D. Munday papers, 80/43/1, IWM.

(4) C.E. Carrington, 'Kitchener's Army: The Somme and After', JRUSI 123, No.11, (1978) p.17. See also letter, nd but c.1936, Col. W. Robertson, CAB 45/137, PRO; R.H. Mottram, Journey to the Western Front (London, 1936) p.144. For an example of 36th Division's learning experience, see P. Orr, The Road to the Somme (Belfast, 1987) pp.118-19.

March, and one in July 1915. (1) There was no repetition of Loos or Suvla Bay, where inexperienced New Army troops had been pitched into battle without first learning the rudiments of warfare on active service. Thus, in attempting to explain how British morale survived the disappointment and casualties of 1 July, it necessary to dispense with the idea that the soldiers were 'lambs to the slaughter'.

Writing of the later stages of the Somme campaign, Haig's chaplain suggested that the army's 'old "death or glory" spirit' had largely disappeared. In its place all ranks displayed 'a quiet fortitude and a resolute determination to carry on to the end'.(2) Capt. Hardie, Third Army's censor, came to similar conclusions, writing in his report of November 1916 of a 'dogged determination to see the thing through at any cost'. (3) The endurance of the BEF is a theme which echoes through many reports from this period. In this respect some comments made in September 1916 by B.H. Liddell Hart, then an enthusiastic young company commander of 9/KOYLI, were typical. Liddell Hart wrote of the 'wonderful courage and discipline' of the infantry. A few of the men were fearless, a few were too stupid to experience fear, but the majority, he stressed, were just ordinary men. (4)

That is not to suggest that morale was always high. Individual actions fought under particular conditions could place morale of units under some strain. In August an attack of 35th (Bantam) Division failed, with some of the men, who were

(1) E.A. James, British Regiments, 1914-18 (London, 1978) pp.46-47, 113; H.C. O'Neill, The Royal Fusiliers in the Great War (London, 1922) p.6.

(2) G.S. Duncan, Douglas Haig As I Knew Him (London, 1966) p.45.

(3) Censorship Report, Third Army, (Nov. 1916) p.6, M. Hardie papers, 84/46/1. IWM.

(4) B.H. Liddell Hart, 'Impressions of the Great British Offensive on the Somme', p.51, CAB 45/135, PRO.

little more than children, being found crying.(1) In September, the morale of 49th Division before its attack on Thiepval was adversely affected by the knowledge that previous assaults on this objective, including one by this division, had been failures.(2) 12th Division's action at Le Transloy in October, according to one survivor, caused a lowering of morale. Another officer of 12th Division mentioned two factors which indicated the decline of morale; excessive straggling and a tendency for infantry to go to ground under hostile artillery fire. In retrospect, this witness claimed that fighting for 'limited objectives' undermined the morale of the infantry: '[they were] murderous affairs to all infantry, with nothing to stir the imagination as to victory'. (3) The views of an officer of 7/Suffolks, who fought at Le Transloy in 12th Division, must be set against this. This unit had suffered heavy casualties during July and August, and in October was handicapped by understrength companies, lack of training and the presence of many reinforcements. In addition, the battalion's battle began with an exhausting approach march along 'muddy tracks'. Yet the morale of the battalion was judged to be 'very good' considering all the difficulties.(4) Again, we have evidence that the spirit of the army was essentially sound, although external appearances suggested otherwise.

The ultimate test of morale is willingness to engage in combat, and the

(1) Diary, 26 Aug. 1916, H. Dalton papers, Dalton I/I 130, BLPES.

(2) Letter, 30 Apr. 1936, E. Skinner, CAB 45/137, PRO.

(3) Letter, 13 Apr. 1936, CAB 45/132, PRO (signature of writer illegible).

(4) Letter, 31 Mar. 1930, L.A.G Bowen, CAB 45/132, PRO.

BEF's divisions continued to fight, with some degree of success, throughout the campaign. It is notable that the final operations of the campaign, on the Ancre, were conducted fought under exceptionally bad conditions. The historian of 19th Division declared that it had 'never known greater exhaustion or discomfort than that experienced in November 1916...'(1) J.F.C Fuller believed that the conditions were responsible for causing 'considerable numbers' of British troops to desert to the enemy, the only time in the war for which Fuller had evidence of this occurring.(2) Yet Beaumont Hamel was captured by the British in this final spasm of the Somme, just as the Germans had been steadily driven back over the previous five months, albeit very slowly and at enormous cost to the attackers. In sum, the evidence suggests that the BEF began the Somme campaign with a strong will to fight, and that the subsequent months of fighting, while imposing severe strains on individuals and units, did not erode the military spirit of the army. An artillery officer summed up the change when he wrote that it was not that the will to win 'disappeared', but the 'spirit of adventurous participation' that had motivated the New Army in July 1916 died away during the Somme offensive.(3)

1917 saw a repetition of the strategy of the previous year on the Western Front. The British Army engaged in two major offensives at Arras (April-May) and at Ypres (July-November). Both of these battles became attritional affairs, and both resulted in heavy British losses; 150,000 at Arras, 250,000 at Ypres. Capt. Hardie's censorship reports, and other evidence, suggests that in the latter

(1) Anon, A Short History of the 19th (Western) Division 1914-18 (London, 1919) p.29.

(2) Evidence of J.F.C. Fuller, PP, 1922, Cmd. 1734, 'Report of the War Office Committee of Enquiry into "Shell-Shock"', p.22.

(3) Unpublished account, p.176, C.E.L. Lyne papers, 80/14/1, IWM.

part of 1917 the BEF's morale was strained but that it remained sound.

The weather in the winter of 1916-17 was exceptionally severe. In January 1917 one battalion recorded temperatures of '20 to 25 degrees of frost'. (1) However, the morale of the troops does not seem to have been unduly depressed, although at least one unit received a lecture on esprit de corps before going into action, which suggests some doubts about their commitment may have existed.(2) Hardie's conclusions on the morale of Third Army in January 1917, can be summed up in the phrase 'Tommy is still in the pink'. Complaints were to be found in soldier's letters, but there were 'no indications' of a 'wish for premature peace'; rather, there was a general acceptance that more sacrifices would have to be made before victory could be achieved. Hardie believed that the willingness of the ordinary British soldier to 'submit without a murmur to guidance and authority, and be prepared simply to 'carry on' without comment or discussion' indicated confidence in the Allied cause, in the conduct of the war, and of 'the justice and efficiency of our military training and methods'. (3)

Haig, writing at the beginning of May 1917, was, perhaps predictably, at pains to stress the confidence of the BEF and the general belief that German losses were higher than those of the British. (4) Hardie's report of May 1917, the period of the Arras offensive, in which Third Army took a prominent part, confirms this view, registering little change from the generally optimistic tone of previous reports.(5) In the second half of 1917, Hardie's reports were

(1) C.A.C. Keeson, The History and Records of Queen Victoria's Rifles (London, 1923) p.212.

(2) War Diary, 1/6 Londons, 17 Feb. 1917, WO 95/2729, PRO.

(3) 'Report on Morale etc III Army', January 1917, pp.1. 5, 7, M. Hardie papers, 84/46/1, IWM. See also Charteris to Macdonogh, 24 Feb. 1917, WO 158/898, PRO, for favourable comments on Second Army's morale.

(4) Haig to Robertson, 1 May 1917, WO 158/23, PRO.

(5) 'Report on Morale etc' [May 1917], M. Hardie papers, 84/46/1, IWM.

indicating a distinct change in the tone of soldier's letters. In a report based on 900 letters read over the period 8th July to 24 August, he stated that 'it must be frankly admitted that the letters show an increasing amount of war-weariness.' He noted 'a tinge of despondency which has never been apparent before' and considerable 'unsettled feeling about the continuation and conclusion and after-effects of the war', leading to a replacement of 'active enthusiasm' by 'passive acceptance'. Talk of peace, which had been rare earlier in the year, was now 'frequent'. Complaints about matters such as lack of leave outnumbered references to the strain of combat by about five to one, and the average soldier did not seek 'peace at any price', but there was 'an immense and widespread longing for any reasonable and honourable settlement that will bring the war to a close'.(1) A further report of 19 October offered even more alarming conclusions: that the willingness of the soldier to abandon his rights as an individual and obey his military masters without question was beginning to end. (2)

Hardie's views are supported by other evidence. Gibbs believed that Third Ypres adversely affected morale:

For the first time the British Army lost its spirit of optimism, and there was a sense of deadly depression among many officers and men with whom I came in touch. They saw no ending of the war, and nothing except continuous slaughter, such as that in Flanders. (3)

The French official history also commented on the 'weariness' of the BEF at the beginning of winter.(4) However, as Gibbs himself stated, the discipline of the BEF remained intact.(5) Even Lloyd George, who denounced the 'stupid and squalid strategy' of the last stage of Passchendaele, which, he believed, exhausted the BEF and destroyed its confidence in its leaders, commented on the

(1) 'Report on Moral etc' [Aug. 1917], M. Hardie papers, 84/46/1, IWM.

(2) 'Report on Peace' 19 Oct. 1917, M. Hardie papers, 84/46/1, IWM.

(3) Gibbs, Realities of War p.396.

(4) Quoted in Lloyd George, II, 1468.

(5) Gibbs, Realities of War p.396.

dogged fighting of the army in this phase.(1)

Other evidence supports the view that the military spirit of BEF remained intact at the end of 1917, whatever its mood. On 18 December 1917 a report was submitted to the War Cabinet, compiled from a study of 17,000 frontline soldiers' letters and general impressions formed during the previous three months. This has been described as 'the nearest thing available to a Gallup (sic) poll' for the period. The report stated categorically that 'The Morale of the Army is sound'. Positive and negative letters were about evenly balanced in Second Army, which was taking the lead in the offensive at Ypres. The numbers of negative letters written by men of other Armies were considerably outweighed by positive letters, suggesting that the conditions at Ypres were indeed placing the men of Second Army under considerable mental and physical stress. Despite much unfavourable news (the 'Russian debacle and the Italian setback'), and considerable 'war weariness' and 'an almost universal longing for peace', the BEF remained willing to fight on to achieve victory. (2)

The success of the German counterattack at Cambrai on 1 December 1917 placed a question mark against the morale of some British formations. General Smuts was sent to France to report on the situation. In two memoranda submitted to the War Cabinet, he concluded that the 'Moral (sic) of the army is good'. Smuts proceeded to highlight some major problems which were likely to affect the morale of the BEF. The men, particularly the infantry, were tired, a problem exacerbated by the need to prepare defensive positions. This also reduced the time available for training, and 'rest...a psychological factor of the utmost importance'. Smuts foresaw that, should the British agree to the

(1) Lloyd George, II, p.1467.

(2) 'The British Armies in France as gathered from Censorship', 18 Dec. 1917, GT 3044, CAB 24/36, PRO; G. Blaxland, Amiens 1918 (London, 1981 edn.) p.7.

French request for the British to take over more trenches, 'we shall be running serious risks. We shall be straining the army too far.' In sum, Smuts did not believe that the resolve of the BEF had been seriously weakened, although complacency was unwise.(1)

The fact that censorship reports included evidence that morale was less than perfect caused some controversy. In October 1917 the CIGS recorded his belief that 'by no means' every British soldier on the Western Front was 'possessed of a good morale', and that this was 'only natural and to a greater or lesser extent common to all armies'. (2) Writing two days later, the ever-optimistic Charteris complained that Robertson had underestimated 'the extraordinary high morale' revealed by the monthly censorship reports. (3) While a brief report submitted to the Cabinet on 13 September certainly supports Charteris's view, the rather more sombre tone of other extant reports tends to support the CIGS. (4)

There are several factors which help to explain why the BEF's morale remained relatively high in early 1917, declined as a result of the offensive at Ypres but did not collapse. The British won a series of minor but important victories in the first half of 1917. Offensive operations were renewed on the Somme in January and the British obtained some success. The German retreat to the Hindenburg Line in March 1917 appeared to be conclusive evidence that the Germans were losing the war, and allowed the Somme to be presented as a victory

(1) 'Memorandum' by General Smuts, 3 Jan. 1918, GT 3198, CAB 24/37, PRO: (see also Appx B.1, 'Report by 3rd Army Commander' [Byng]); 'Memorandum of a visit to the Western Front by General Smuts', 27 Jan. 1918, GT 3469, CAB 24/40, PRO.

(2) Robertson to Haig, 18 Oct. 1917, WO 158/24, PRO.

(3) 'Remarks of B.G.G.S., "I"', 20 Oct. 1917, WO 158/24, PRO.

(4) 'Note on the Moral of British Troops in France as disclosed by the Censorship', 13 Sept. 1917, GT 2052, CAB 24/26, PRO.

because the Germans had abandoned the field of battle to the Allies.(1) The brief phase of mobile warfare as the British followed up the retreating Germans also seems to have provided a boost to the morale of some units. (2) The initial success in the Arras offensive in April, and the seizing of Messines Ridge in June, also offered evidence of British victories.

The failure of the initial stages of the Third Battle of Ypres, the heavy casualties sustained, and poor weather help to explain the decline in morale in August. Two factors which may have helped offset the decline in morale might be mentioned. Firstly, the genuine success of the limited offensives fought by Plumer's Second Army at the battles of Menin Road Ridge, Polygon Wood, and Broodseinde; and secondly, although Passchendaele Ridge might have been gained at an appallingly high price, its capture was proof that the British were continuing to steadily advance, and the Germans were continuing to give ground: 'Troops were now resting where once they could not have stood up'. The BEF's sacrifices had brought tangible reward.(3) Finally, the offensive at Cambrai, although ultimately a failure, was initially brilliantly successful.

The evidence offered in this section could be supplemented by a host of other examples drawn from lower echelons of the army.(4) The most important testimony to the state of British morale during the Passchendaele offensive is the fact that, with the atypical exception of the Etaples mutiny of September 1917, which is discussed in a later chapter, the men of the BEF continued to obey orders, and also to fight reasonably effectively. Taken together, the evidence suggests that in 1917 the BEF's morale was tested, but not to destruction.

(1) The final frame of a 1917 version of the film The Battle of the Somme makes this point by showing a map of ground abandoned by the Germans in early 1917. IWM video, 1987.

(2) Anon, The History of 2/6 Battalion The Royal Warwickshire Regiment 1914-19 (Birmingham, 1929) p.47.

(3) Blaxland, p.8.

(4) e.g. letter, Oct. 1963, A.R. Armfield, BBC/GW, IWM.

For the BEF, the year 1918 brought large-scale mobile operations and victory. Victory achieved at a heavy cost. The BEF lost 239,793 men in 40 days in the spring of 1918, compared with the loss of 244,897 in 105 days of Third Ypres,(1) although as has recently been pointed out, during the period of the Allied offensive (8 August-11 November 1918) fatalities were remarkably low: about 20,000 for Fourth Army, the spearhead formation.(2) This hitherto little-noticed factor may well have played an effect in maintaining British morale.

Traditionally, the initial success of the German Spring Offensive which began on 21 March 1918 has been attributed, in part at least, to 'the poor and cowardly spirit of the officers and men' of Fifth Army.(3) These accusations were in part politically inspired, but have been echoed by some historians.(4) Did British military morale really collapse in the spring of 1918? The evidence of the censorship report of July 1918 suggests it did not. In this report, which was based on the study of 83,621 letters and covered the period from April, it is stated that the 'High moral quality' of March was 'amply confirmed by latter experience'. The comments on the morale of Fourth Army (as Fifth Army had been renamed) are particularly interesting. It is frankly admitted that it would have been 'misleading' to suggest that this formation was 'happy'. In addition to a general sense of war-weariness, there was a decline in confidence in politicians, and if not in the higher command, at least in the 'higher administration of the Army'. Yet the men of Fourth Army's 'combative spirit'

remains very high, so far as the earnest desire for a successful finish of the war is concerned, and the determination to stick it out to the end is generally expressed in terms which leave no doubt.

(1) J. Terraine, The First World War (London, 1984) p.168.

(2) R. Prior and T. Wilson, Command on the Western Front (Oxford, 1992) p.391.

(3) H. Gough, Soldiering On (London, 1954) pp.176-78

(4) e.g. Keegan, p. 276.

Comments of a similarly positive nature were made about the morale of other formations. 'The persistence and determination' of the men of Second Army, who had borne the brunt of the German offensive around Ypres in April, was described as 'remarkable': 'They were very tired but unbeaten'.(1)

A soldier of 2/Devons perhaps caught the essence of the morale of the BEF during the spring battles when he wrote of the general belief that, despite all setbacks, they remained confident that everything would be all right in the end.(2) An artillery officer considered Haig's 'Backs to the Wall' message of 11 April 1918 to be damaging to morale on the grounds that many soldiers 'had not admitted even to themselves' how serious the position was.(3) Furthermore, mere rumours that the British were striking back at the Germans was enough, in good Clausewitzian fashion, to boost morale.(4)

On 21 March 1918 the Germans took 98.5 square miles of ground from the British Third and Fifth Armies (all but 19 square miles from the latter). The British defenders suffered about 38,500 casualties, including 21,000 POWs. Approximately 500 guns were taken by the Germans, mostly from Fifth Army. Heavy losses of prisoners and guns are often taken as signs of defeat, and there is also much anecdotal evidence of British soldiers surrendering without putting up much resistance.(5)

However, it would be unwise to deduce from these facts and figures that British morale was low in March 1918. As Martin Middlebrook points out, many factors serve to distort the picture, not least the overall strategic plan and the unfamiliarity of the British forces with the concept of defence-in-depth,

(1) 'The British Armies in France as gathered from censorship', Haig Diaries, Appx. to July 1918, WO 256/33, PRO. For an example of a soldier's 'grousing' masking a readiness to fight, taken from the 23 Mar. 1918 diary entry of Lt. F. Warren (17/KRRC), see A. Bird (ed.) Honour Satisfied (Swindon, 1990) p.87.

(2) R.A. Colwill, Through Hell To Victory (Torquay, 1927) p.103.

(3) Anon, 'A Heavy Gunner Looks Back', Twenty Years After I, p.12.

(4) Unpublished account, p.33, C.J. Lodge Patch papers, 86/9/1, IWM; Bird, p.77.

(5) M. Middlebrook, The Kaiser's Battle (London, 1978) pp.308, 322-39, 341.

crammed as many as one-third of the defenders into the forward zone, only to be cut off by the advancing Germans. He suggests that although Fifth Army's morale was far from 'excellent', the morale of at least some units was 'steady'. (1)

The records of stragglers collected by the military police also cast doubt on the traditional belief that Fifth Army routed. Provost sources are unanimously agreed that the majority of stragglers in the first days of the battle were not drawn from front-line units. Many of the stragglers that headed for the rear at the beginning of the battle appear to have been non-combatants who had been employed on defensive positions.

Some statistical evidence has also survived. The busiest periods for the straggler posts of 8th, 24th, 50th, 66th and 16th Divisions occurred during 27-30 March, that is at least six days after the battle began. These figures do not tell the whole story, for of these formations 16th, 24th and 66th Divisions were in action from 21 March, but only 24th Division records any figures for the first two days of the battle. Either the figures for the other divisions were incomplete, or they did not collect any stragglers, which is possible. The evidence of 24th Division certainly supports the contention that the worst period for stragglers came towards the end of March. Thus the majority of stragglers were picked up after their division ^{had been in action for some time.} Sheer exhaustion seems to have been a major factor in causing them to straggle. (2)

Had the morale of Fifth Army indeed collapsed, the Germans would probably have

(1) Ibid pp.105, 332-39.

(2) 'Straggler Posts' pp.25, 30, RMPA. This document is a short history of the subject, apparently compiled shortly after the Armistice, which quotes at length from contemporary documents, many of which have now disappeared. For a further discussion of the subject see G.D. Sheffield, 'The Operational Role of British Military Police on the Western Front, 1914-18' in P. Griffith, (ed.) British Fighting Methods in the Great War (forthcoming).

won the war: the autumn of 1918 was to demonstrate the serious consequences of a genuine weakening in an army's morale. In Churchill's words, 'The Germans, judged by the hard test of gains and losses, were decisively defeated'.(1) In short, the British army fought the German army to a standstill. This is eloquent testimony to the resilience of the military spirit of the British army in early 1918.

In the absence of a censorship report for the second half of 1918, a book by Maj. Gen. A.A. Montgomery, the chief of staff of Fourth Army, is probably the nearest we have to an 'official' view of British morale in the final campaigns on the Western Front. Montgomery laid great stress on the increase in British morale, and a simultaneous decrease in German morale, when the BEF took the offensive in August.(2) Far more dramatically than during the Somme or Passchendaele offensives, in the autumn of 1918 the British soldier was presented with tangible evidence of success. British morale could be judged by the criteria of victory: ground gained, guns and prisoners taken, and a perceptible deterioration in the morale of many German units. In the words of an officer of 46th Division, the BEF 'was at last obtaining a just reward for all its dogged and patient fighting'.(3) It is interesting to compare these comments with those of a German infantry officer:

There can be no doubt that the reason for the slow decline of morale within the German Army over the final months of the war was the feeling of the soldiers that they were being ground to pieces in one useless, pointless, and hopeless offensive action after another. (4)

It is likely that the British infantry's morale was somewhat brittle by the Armistice. R.H. Mottram argued that by late 1918 'a new spirit of taking care

(1) W.S. Churchill, The World Crisis 1911-1918 II, (London, 1938 edn.) p.1289.

(2) A.A. Montgomery, The Story of the Fourth Army in the Battles of the Hundred Days, August 8 to November 11, 1918 (London, 1920) pp. 1, 5, 9, 145-6, 237.

(3) R.E. Priestly, Breaking the Hindenburg Line (London, 1919) p.87.

(4) G. Ritter, The Sword and the Sceptre IV, (London, 1973) p. 232.

of one's self' had emerged among the infantry, who would have begun 'not refusing but simply omitting to do duty' if the war had continued beyond 11 November. (1) Given the irrefutable facts that British troops continued to advance, win battles and take casualties until the very end of the war, Mottram's statement is clearly an exaggeration. After the Armistice came into effect there was a distinct change in the attitude of many soldiers towards their employment, in military terms, there was a collapse of morale, (see chapter 9 below) but this occurred after, not before, the end of hostilities.

In conclusion, it would be difficult to improve upon Charles Douie's assesement of British morale in 1918. Douie served as a temporary subaltern in 1/Dorsets, and ten years after the war he wrote (in response to the 'disillusioned' school) of the generally 'magnificent' state of morale in the BEF in the last year of the war. He argued that the BEF of 1918 was inferior in quality to its predecessor of 1916. However,

it was good enough to sustain a defensive battle against a great superiority of numbers on the Somme and the Lys, and to return to the attack and remain continuously on the offensive from August to November. The infantry at least had no doubt that they were winning, and their faith was justified when the greatest military Power of modern times finally collapsed in disordered retreat...(2)

Generally speaking, a rapid and decisive victory can only be achieved when one side is greatly inferior to the other in terms of fighting power. On the Western Front the two sides were roughly equally matched. In the March 1915-March 1918 period, British offensive operations frequently commenced with an attempt to reopen mobile warfare, but when the hoped-for penetration failed to materialise such battles were continued in an attempt to 'wear out' the

(1) R.H. Mottram, J. Easton, E. Partridge, Three Personal Accounts of the War (1929) p.127. It should be noted that Mottram was not serving with an infantry battalion at the end of 1918. His views can be profitably compared with the optimistic view of a private of 1/23 Londons; see letter, A.E. Abrey, 7 Oct. 1918, 84/4/1, IWM.

(2) C. Douie, The Weary Road (London, 1931) pp.15-16.

enemy's strength and morale. Thus although the opening phases of both the Somme offensive of 1916 and the Third Battle of Ypres in 1917 were designed to achieve a breakthrough, they evolved into attritional battles. From early 1915 onwards Haig was convinced that German morale would shortly collapse,(1) and thus continued to fight attritional battles designed in part to deplete enemy morale. With some justice, in his final despatch Haig was able to claim that the battles of the previous four years should be treated as 'a single continuous campaign' which had contributed to weakening the German army. (2) Certainly, for a variety of reasons, German military (and also civilian) morale began to crumble in the summer and autumn of 1918.(3) In retrospect, the Allied victory of 1918 can be ascribed in very large part to the fact that the morale of the British soldier remained intact ^{while} that of his German counterpart finally gave way. This is not to deny the importance of factors such as improvements in British tactical and operational methods; (4) but these would have availed little had the morale of the BEF collapsed.

Attrition, as the French discovered in 1917, is a two-edged sword which is as likely to damage the morale of the attacker as that of the defender. This chapter has analysed the concept of morale and British official attitudes to morale in the era of the Great War, and has demonstrated that British military morale remained essentially sound throughout the campaigns on the Western Front. With this essential groundwork laid, in the following chapters a major factor in the resilience of the BEF's morale will be examined: the relationship between the regimental officer and the soldier.

(1) Haig to Lady Haig, 1 Apr. 1915, Haig papers, NLS (m).

(2) J.H. Boraston, (ed) Sir Douglas Haig's Despatches (London, 1979) pp.319-21.

(3) Why Germany Capitulated on November 11 1918 - A brief study based on documents in the possession of the French General Staff, Appx. II, SCL; R.H. Lutz, The Causes of the German Collapse in 1918 (Stanford, Ca, 1934) pp.176-77.

(4) See Prior and Wilson; T. Travers, How the War Was Won (London, 1992).

Chapter 4

The British Officer Corps, 1914-1918

Regimental officers of the British army of the Great War can be divided into seven broad categories. Firstly, Regular officers with peacetime service. Secondly, officers who were granted permanent commissions during the war years. Thirdly, civilians who were granted Temporary commissions which ^{were} valid for the duration of the war only. Fourthly, Territorial officers commissioned in peacetime. Fifthly, 'prewar' ranker-officers, men who had served in the ranks of the Regular army before the war. Sixthly, 'prewar Territorial' ranker-officers, men who had served as privates or NCOs in TF units before the war. Lastly, 'wartime Temporary' ranker-officers. The latter term does not necessarily indicate that an individual was of the class that had dominated the ranks of the prewar Regular army, for large numbers of middle- and even upper-class men served in the ranks of the army in the first few months of the war.

The purpose of this chapter and the next is to examine the way in which the British army responded to the need to recruit and train unprecedentedly large numbers of officers during the years 1914 to 1918. It will be argued that many of the men commissioned in this period were of humbler social status than their prewar Regular counterparts. The army pragmatically moulded such men, by a process of education, training and socialisation, into passable replicas of the prewar Regular officer. Thus the ethos and values of the prewar Regular officer class, especially paternalistic care for their men, were passed onto their wartime successors. This had important implications for the maintenance of British military morale on the Western Front. The chapter will begin with an examination of the social composition of the officer corps. The process of officer selection will then be assessed.

4.1 The Social Composition of the Officer Class, 1914-1918

On 17 September 1914, the Secretary of State for War, Lord Kitchener, announced that he was looking to volunteers and Regular NCOs to provide officers needed for the newly-expanded army.(1) Larger numbers of officers drawn from 'non-traditional' sources were commissioned during 1914-18 than in any previous war. This was, in part, a consequence of the very high casualties sustained by junior officers, and the disproportionately heavy losses inflicted on the social elite.(2) It was also a reflection of the sheer size of the army raised between 1914 and 1918. Approximately 5,704,000 men served in the army during the course of the war. The total strength of the ^{forces}land/ grew from 733,514 on 1 August 1914 to an estimated 5,336,943 on Armistice Day, 11 November 1918.(3)

There were 28,060 officers in the British army on 4 August 1914, of whom 12,738 were Regulars. On 11 November 1918, the army possessed 164,255 officers. (See Table 1). In all, some 247,061 commissions were granted from the beginning of the war up to 1st December 1918 to combatant officers, chaplains, and the RAMC; this figure excludes Royal Defence Corps, Dominion and Indian Army commissions.(4) The average number of commissions granted per annum between 1908 and 1913 had been a mere 649. (5)

In view of the fact that in 1910 the Adjutant-General had asserted that 'We are coming to the end of our tether as regards candidates from the limited

(1) The Times 18 Sept. 1914, p.10.

(2) Winter, Great War pp.83-99.

(3) P. Simkins, Kitchener's Army (Manchester, 1988) p.XIV; Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire During the Great War 1914-20 (HMSO, 1922) pp.29-30. The latter figure includes Indian and other 'native' troops. See also p. 326.

(4) Ibid pp.234-36.

(5) M.A. Wingfield, 'The Supply and Training of Officers for the Army', JRUSI, LXII, No.475, (1924), p.433.

class which has hitherto supplied the commissioned ranks' of the Regular army,(1) it is not surprising that the War Office had to reach far beyond its traditional sources of supply of officers to provide enough leaders for the mass army of 1914-18. However, it was not the original intention of the military authorities to broaden the social base of the officer class to any great extent. The usual initial insistence that potential officers should possess OTC certificates A (from a public school OTC) or B (from a university OTC), and the recruiting policies of many of the raisers of units in 1914-15 suggest that it was hoped that officers could be provided for the enlarged wartime army with the minimum disturbance to the social status quo. The pressure of war quickly forced the abandonment of this policy.

There was an alternative to opening the commissioned ranks to middle- and working-class men. The German army attempted to preserve the social homogeneity and quality of its officer corps. A senior NCO, an officer cadet (Fahnrich) or a 'substitute officer' (Offizier Stellvertreter) were habitually appointed to positions such as platoon commander which in the British army would have been held by a commissioned officer. In March 1918 each German infantry battalion possessed an average of only seven officers, while at full strength each British battalion should have had about thirty-six, although in the field the numbers often fell below this. In all, during the First World War the Germans had roughly the same number of officers as the numerically inferior British army. (2) The British army's policy of awarding Temporary commissions also, in the long term, insulated the officer corps. It was possible, although not easy, to convert from a Temporary to a Regular commission; 1,109 Temporary officers were among the total of 16,544 men who were granted Regular commissions from 5

(1) Ibid p.434.

(2) K. Demeter, The German Officer-Corps in Society and State 1650-1945 (London, 1965) p.47-48; D.B. Nash, Imperial German Army Handbook 1914-1918 (London, 1980) pp.19-20.

August 1918 to 1 December 1918. (1) Temporary officers were not always granted Regular commissions in their original regiment. One, on hearing that he had obtained a Regular commission in the E. Yorks. wrote that he had "Never heard of 'em before" and that he was seeking a transfer to the first battalion of his original regiment, the E. Surreys.(2) The parsimonious distribution of Regular commissions ensured that the impact of the influx of lower-class men into the British officer class was short-lived. The vast majority left the army in 1918-19, so the postwar British officer class more closely resembled that of 1913 than that of 1918 (see also chapter 9).

However, in the short term, a revolutionary change occurred in the social composition of the wartime British army. This can be illustrated by the figures for demobilisation of officers. Officers and men were placed in one of forty-four occupational groups. The dispersal certificates of 140,573 of the officers who had been demobilised by 12 May 1920 were analysed by the War Office. There are some anomalies in the data, and the categories employed are so broad that it is not always possible to determine exactly what job is being referred to. Industrial group 1, Agriculture, seems to cover both farmers and farm labourers, for example. However, these statistics do give a clear picture of the social status of the officers corps in 1918. The three largest single categories of officers' occupations are 'commercial and clerical' (group 37) 'students and teachers' (group 43) and 'professional men' (group 42). These groups, which cover broadly middle-class occupations, account for 60.5 per cent of the total (85,889 men).

(1) Statistics of Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War (London, 1922) p.234.

(2) Letter, 4. Nov. 1915, WPN1/95, W.P. Nevill papers, IWM.

Table 1

Officers serving in the British army at the beginning and end of the Great War

	4 August 1914	11 November 1918
Regular and New Army:	12,738	74,200
Special Reserve:	2,557	28,000
Territorial:	9,563	60,055
Reserve of Officers:	3,202	2,000
Total:	<u>28,060</u>	<u>164,255</u>

NB: New Army figures apply to 1918 only. All figures are approximate.

Source: Statistics of Military Effort p.234.

Table 2

Principal occupations of officers demobilised, 11 November 1918 to 12 May 1920, as expressed as a percentage of those returns analysed.

Commercial and clerical	38,572	(27.5 per cent)
Students and teachers	25,577	(18 per cent)
Professional men	21,740	(15 per cent)
Engineering	11,389	(8 per cent)

NB: All percentages have been rounded up to the nearest .5 per cent.

Source: Statistics of Military Effort p.707.

Even if one deducts the 'clerical and commercial' category, as likely to contain men of a lower social status than the other two groups, one is still left with the not unimpressive total of 47,317 men, or 33.5 per cent (See Table 2). Furthermore, when expressed as a percentage of all men, both officers and other ranks, who were demobilized from the army from these occupational groups, other significant patterns emerge. About 44 per cent of all professional men, 38 per cent of all students and teachers, (but only 8 per cent of commercial and clerical workers) were demobilised as officers. By comparison, only 0.2 per cent of general labourers demobilised in this period served as officers.(1)

As J.M. Winter has suggested, the raw data suggests a 'pattern of middle-class domination of the officers corps' with only the body of engineering workers providing an exception. (2) However, by comparison with the prewar structure of the officer class, some significant variations can be noted. The term 'middle-class' is a somewhat elastic one and undoubtedly includes men who would not have been thought suitable for a commission in the old Regular army. In the course of the war some men who were on the social borderline between the lower-middle and upper-working classes came to be regarded as suitable to take commissions. In October 1916, a general commented approvingly upon the type of man to be found in 2/5 Buffs, a 'Bank Clerks Battalion', whom he considered to be officer material. They were, of course, likely to have been very few former bank clerks serving as officers in the prewar Regular army.(3)

It will be recalled that in 1913 only about ^{per cent} 2½ of those commissioned had passed through the ranks. If this may be taken as a benchmark against which to judge working-class penetration of the prewar officer corps, the demobilization

(1) Statistics of Military Effort pp.707.

(2) Winter, Great War p.83.

(3) Book 7, p.16, G.G.A. Egerton papers, 73/51/1, IWM.

figures reveal that the officer class had been considerably democratised by 1918. There are difficulties in interpreting the occupational groups, but numbers of working-class men may be discerned, such as carters (148 officers) dock and wharf labourers (184), seamen and fishermen (638), leather tanners (99) coal and shale miners (1,016) and warehousemen and porters (266). These figures may include some of the foreman/overseer type who perhaps shade into the lower reaches of the middle classes. (1)

A rough-and-ready guide to the social status of each category is to compare the numbers of men who became officers with those who remained in the ranks. From our sample, 21,740 professional men became officers, as against 26,988 who remained in the ranks. By contrast, 7,495 workers in agriculture became officers, while 301,770 served in the ranks. 157 coachbuilders and woodworkers were demobilised as officers, and 34,222 left the army as other ranks. In all, 54,584 officers, or 39^{per cent} of the sample, were demobilised from the 41 remaining industrial groups, which, with the reservations noted above, may be classified as broadly 'working-class' or at least 'lower-middle class' occupations. However imprecise the figures, it is clear that in 1918 many men were serving as army officers who would have been effectively excluded on educational and social grounds from obtaining a Regular or even a Territorial commission before the war. Many of these men, to judge from the occupational categories, were drawn from the artisan class, with the engineering industry providing the largest proportion of officers (11,389 officers, 359,948 other ranks).(2)

These bare statistics are supported by a wide variety of other evidence. R.C. Sheriff used 'Trotter', a working-class ranker-officer archetype in his play Journey's End,(3) for instance, while a middle-class ranker complained

(1) Statistics of Military Effort p.707.

(2) Ibid p.707.

(3) R.C. Sherriff, Journey's End (London, 1958 edn.).

that by 1917 any 'Tom, Dick or Harry' could be put forward for a commission.(1) More specifically, on joining a Special Reserve unit, 3/SLI, in October 1917, a public school officer wrote that 'about sixty-five percent' of the officers were 'gentlemen', which, he opined, was about as many as could be expected. (2)

While it was true that a middle-class man was far more likely to receive a commission than a member of the working-classes, and the latter were grossly under-represented in officers' messes given the numbers of them serving in the army, a limited meritocracy emerged in the British army during the Great War. The official claim that 'no barrier' existed to prevent talented rankers gaining commissions was an exaggeration, but perhaps a pardonable one. (3)

4.2 Sources of Officers: Territorial Class Corps

By the end of 1914, 4,082 officers of the BEF had become casualties, of whom 1,230 had died.(4) As early as mid-September 1914, 593 officers had been sent to the BEF as battle casualty replacements, a rate which caused Kitchener some concern.(5) Kitchener had to balance the requirements of the BEF and other units on active service against those of the newly raised Territorial and New Army units. The latter units, in training in the UK, necessitated the retention of a number of officers who could have been used to supplement the reservists and Special Reserve officers being sent as reinforcements to France, much to the disgust of Henry Wilson, who complained that 'K's shadow armies' were robbing the BEF of 'good officers and men'.(6) The military authorities were thus compelled to look elsewhere for officers to fill the gaps in the battalions of

(1) H. Quigley, Passchendaele and the Somme (London, 1928) p.28.

(2) W. Hooper, (ed.) Letters of C.S. Lewis (London, 1988 edn.) p.67.

(3) PP, 1917, Cmd. 8642, Report of Committee on Promotion of Officers in the Special Reserve, New Army and Territorial Force, p.608.

(4) Statistics of Military Effort p.253.

(5) Kitchener to French, 16 Sept. 1914, quoted in G. Arthur, Life of Lord Kitchener III, (London, 1920) p.65.

(6) Wilson to Kiggell, 15 Sept. 1914, III/1, L. Kiggell papers, LHCMA.

the BEF.

Men serving in the ranks of Territorial class corps in France, who combined the advantages of reasonably high social status with experience of active service, were an obvious source of officers. Class corps began to be viewed with envious eyes by Regular commanding officers. Indeed, it had been proposed by the War Office at the time of the creation of the TF that the Artists' Rifles (1/28 Londons) should become an officers' training corps, but in the event, it was agreed that ten per cent of its rank-and-file would be made available for commissions on mobilisation.(1)

Training for Territorials commissioned in the field was initially scanty. In November 1914, some men of the Artists' were commissioned and returned to the trenches as an officer in a Regular battalion within twenty-four hours, wearing a second-lieutenant's 'pip' on a private's tunic. By the beginning of December 1914 potential officers (or 'commissionairs') were being given crash courses in officership, the Artists' having been turned into 'a Training Corps for Officers in the Field'. (2) The training given was both theoretical and practical. Potential officers received lectures and instruction and spent forty-eight hours in the trenches before being posted to a Regular battalion.(3) This system, rough and ready that it may have been, seems to have been regarded as a success; Rawlinson, the commander of 7th Division, wrote to Kitchener in November 1914 that the subalterns commissioned from the ranks of the Artists' were 'first class...and the cry is "give us more of them"'. (4)

The ranks of Territorial class corps continued to be a fertile recruiting

(1) Blomfield, pp.66-7; A.R. Haig-Brown, The OTC and the Great War (London, 1915) p.77.

(2) Diary, 14 Nov., 3 Dec. 1914, B.O. Dewes papers, 84/22/1, IWM.

(3) Sir. J. French, Dispatch 2 Feb. 1915; E. Wallace, Kitchener's Army and the Territorial Forces (London, nd) p.175.

(4) Rawlinson to Kitchener, 25 Nov. 1914, WB/7, PRO 30/57/51, Kitchener Papers, PRO.

ground for officers during 1915. During their eight months of service in the Ypres salient to February 1916, 100 men of the Queen's Westminster Rifles (1/16 Londons) were commissioned or transferred to cadet schools. (1) According to a rifleman of 1/5 Londons, in the spring of 1915 Regular commanding officers were 'only too eager' to take LRB veterans as officers, but the battalion CO was reluctant to release his men for fear of his entire unit evaporating, some ninety-five per cent of other ranks being suitable to take commissions.(2) Similarly, not all the rankers of class corps were eager to see their units transformed into officer training units.(3)

4.3 Sources of Officers: 'Dugouts' and the OTC

Reserve and Special Reserve officers, and those cadets hastily commissioned from Sandhurst and Woolwich in the autumn of 1914 were mostly sent as reinforcements for the BEF, and were therefore unavailable for the New Armies. Kitchener went to extraordinary lengths to provide officers for his volunteer army. He kept back cadres from the BEF, which in the case of infantry battalions amounted to three officers and a proportion of NCOs, and arbitrarily detained 500 Indian army officers who happened to be at home on leave. Kitchener also tapped the reservoir of 'dugouts' or retired officers.(4) A document dated 6 September 1914 reveals something of his ruthless determination to obtain officers. Kitchener ordered the Adjutant-General to obtain from the Post Office the details of letters sent to individuals with military titles, and then write to them with an invitation to rejoin the army 'in such a manner that he can

(1) Henriques, p.73.

(2) [A. Smith], Four Years On the Western Front. By a Rifleman (London, 1987 edn.) p.69.

(3) Diary, 14 Nov. 1914, B.O. Dewes papers, 84/22/1, IWM.

(4) See P. Simkins, Kitchener's Army (Manchester, 1988) pp. 212-25, for a scholarly study of the provision of officers for the New Armies. See also G.H. Cassar, Kitchener: Architect of Victory (London, 1977) p.202, 209-10.

hardly refuse'. Kitchener also ordered that the commander of every unit in the country, including Territorials, should be asked to put forward the names of likely WOs and NCOs for commissions. By methods such as these, Kitchener hoped to bring about a situation in which newly raised battalions and units of the BEF 'have the same proportion, as far as possible of experienced and inexperienced officers'.(1)

Another potential source of officers were men who had served in the OTC. An announcement appeared in newspapers on 10 September 1914 that '2000 Junior Officers (unmarried) are immediately required' to serve with the Regular army until the conclusion of the war. They had to be cadets or ex-cadets of a university OTC, or members of a university aged between seventeen and thirty. Even at these stage, the War Office was prepared to accept men without OTC experience, providing that they possessed the necessary educational and social qualifications. 'Other young men of good general education' were advised to apply, in person, to the commander of their nearest army depot.(2) Depot commanders would be able to judge, from seeing would-be officers in the flesh, whether they would be acceptable in an officers' mess.

The Officers Training Corps was formed in 1908. It consisted of Junior and Senior divisions, the first consisting of public school, the latter of university corps.(3) In 1907, just prior to the formation of the OTC, there existed eight cadet battalions, three Rifle Volunteer Battalions and 152 cadet corps or companies.(4) These units were of doubtful military value. Great attention was paid to shooting and drill, but very little to tactical training.

(1) 'Instructions of Secretary of State', 6 Sept. 1914, WO 162/2, PRO.

(2) Daily Mirror 10 Sept. 1914, p.4.

(3) Army Order 297, 1908. For the raising of the OTC see E.M. Teagarden, 'Lord Haldane and the Origins of the Officer Training Corps', JSAHR XLV, No.192, (1967) pp.91-96, and Spiers, Haldane pp.135-41.

(4) W. Richards, His Majesty's Territorial Army IV, (London, 1911) p.165.

In 1907 a War Office committee recommended that the OTC should be established, on the basis of existing corps, as a means of overcoming the shortage of officers for the army.(1) By 1914 OTCs existed at 79 per cent of all public schools, which amounted to about 60 per cent of all junior OTCs. (2)

The OTC was unpopular and underfunded in peacetime, and relied so heavily on the goodwill of the part-time officers of the OTC that one claimed that the country had 'solved the riddle of getting something for nothing'.(3) The success of the scheme may be gauged from the fact that between August 1914 and March 1915 approximately 20,577 (and possibly as many as 27,000) men who ^{were} serving, or who had served, in the ranks of the OTC had been commissioned. This was exclusive of the 6,322 men who had been gazetted from the OTC between 1908 and the outbreak of war, or who had served in school cadet corps prior to the formation of the OTC in 1908.(4)

Peter Simkins has pointed out that the use of the OTC as a source for officers ensured 'that there was no sudden and radical change in the social composition of the officer corps in the first year of the war'. (5) However, the use of the OTC did occasion a more modest change in the social profile of the British officer. No less than 41 per cent of the officers who served in the Boer War were drawn from the 'ten great public schools', with Eton alone providing 11 per cent. (6) While impressive numbers of commissions were granted to alumni of the OTCs of such schools between August 1914 and March 1915 (350, 253, 506 and 403 from Eton, Harrow, Marlborough and Wellington respectively),

(1) PP, 1907, XLVI, Cd 3294, Interim Report of the War Office Committee on the provision of officers (a) for service with Regular Army in war, and (b) for the Auxiliary Forces,

(2) C.B. Otley, 'Militarism and militarization in the public schools, 1900-1972', BJS, 29, No.3 (1978) p.330.

(3) Anon, 'Experiences of an O.T.C. Officer', Blackwood's, CXCIX, No.MCCV, (1916) p.399.

(4) Haig-Brown, pp. X, 97-99.

(5) Simkins, Kitchener's Army p.221.

(6) A.H.H. MacLean, Public Schools and the War in South Africa (London, 1902) p.12.

just 10 per cent of OTC commissions went to products of Clarendon schools. Even omitting the 4,697 commissions given to Senior Division candidates from the total, Clarendon commissions amounted to only 13 per cent. In absolute terms more commissions were granted to the more numerous 'lesser' schools, although taken individually, such schools tended to have greater numbers of former pupils serving in the ranks: Dollar Institution provided 35 officers and 200 other ranks, and Wellingborough Grammar School 42 and 44 respectively.(1) Even allowing for the fact that the available figures are incomplete, given the strong correlation between the prewar officer class and the great public schools (2), there is a strong suggestion that the typical officer of the New Armies was socially inferior to his prewar regular counterpart.

The term 'public school' had been defined widely when the OTC was created. 43 of the schools which possessed an OTC in 1914 were not actually listed in the public schools yearbook of 1908, and 19 of those that were did not possess an OTC.(3) St Dunstan's College, Catford did have an OTC, but its pupil's fathers tended to have relatively low status occupations. Clerks abounded, along with accountants, a 'grocer and provisions merchant', an engraver and a 'retail fishmonger and poulter'.(4) Similarly, the boys of Royal Grammar School, Newcastle-upon-Tyne tended to go on to study locally at Armstrong College rather than to attend the ancient universities, and made careers in such solidly middle-class occupations as 'colliery manager', 'assistant surveyor of

(1) Haig-Brown, pp.99-106.

(2) See chapter 1 above and I. Worthington, 'Antecedent Education and Officer Recruitment: the Origins and Early Development of the Public School-Army Relationship', MA XLI, No.4, (1977) pp.187-88.

(3) H.F.W. Deane and W.A. Evans, Public Schools Year Book (London, 1908).

(4) D.W. Collett, St Dunstan's College, Catford, Roll of Honour for the First World War 1914-19 (London, 1928).

shipping' and 'architect'.(1)

In 1908, two criteria were employed when deciding which cadet corps were to be allowed to convert to OTC. Firstly, corps had to 'show an enrolled strength of not less than 30 cadets' over the age of 13 years. Secondly, it had to be militarily efficient. Efficiency was gauged by such factors as the availability of training facilities and qualified officer instructors, and the Army Council reserved the right to disband units which failed to maintain required standards.(2) Social considerations therefore appear to have played a relatively minor role in deciding whether individual units were to be allowed to be upgraded to OTC status. One commentator suggested that by using military effectiveness as the primary criterion for conversion, the military authorities armed themselves with means of checking the abuse of the system by schools who wished to enhance their social prestige by acquiring an OTC.(3)

The implied division between schools of similar types was resented by some. In 1918 the Public Secondary Schools Cadet Association called for 'The sweeping away altogether of the invidious and anomalous distinction at present existing between OTC schools and Cadet Corps schools'.(4) Even in official circles, men who had served in a cadet unit were generally assumed to be of low social status.(5) The familiar story of R.C. Sherriff's unsuccessful attempt to gain a commission in 1914 should be viewed against this background. Sherriff, who was educated at Kingston Grammar School, 'a very old and good' school founded in 1567, was refused a commission because it was not listed as a 'recognised public [school]'. Sherriff's rejection is perfectly explicable on military, rather than social grounds, for his school did not have an OTC or even a cadet

(1) 'In Memorium Royal Grammar School, Newcastle-upon-Tyne (Newcastle, nd).

(2) Regulations for the Officers Training Corps, 1908.

(3) L.E.M. Savill, 'The Development of Military Training in Schools in the British Isles' (Unpublished M.A. thesis, University of London, 1937) pp.15-16.

(4) Public Secondary Schools Cadet Association Camp Magazine (August 1918) p.11.

(5) Hamilton to Haldane, 22 Feb. 1910, WO 32/6622, PRO.

corps, while the Wykehamist who preceded him in the queue, and was accepted, had probably obtained his certificate A from his school's OTC.(1) Many young men educated at grammar schools little different from Kingston received commissions in this period on the strength of their OTC certificates. The War Office's policy on officer recruitment was not entirely consistent in the early months of the war. However, it is clear that the desire for military experience in potential officers played a greater role, and snobbery a lesser role, in its thinking in this period than has sometimes been allowed.

4.4 Sources of Officers: Promotions from the Ranks

In March 1915 12,290 men possessing OTC certificates were reported as serving as other ranks in the army.(2) Large numbers subsequently applied for commissions. Others did not, but were commissioned anyway. P.G. Heath, who served in the OTC at Malvern, enlisted in 23/Londons on the outbreak of war, only to be told one day in the autumn of 1914 that he was now an officer, as a relative had applied for a commission on his behalf.(3)

Some newly-raised battalions were especially rich in potential officers. The four battalions of the 'Universities and Public Schools Brigade' (18/-21/RF) had provided 50 officers for the New Army as early as 23 September 1914, and eventually provided more than 7,000 before their disbandment in early 1916.(4) The potential of the rankers of the Public Schools Battalion (16/Middlesex) was soon recognised, and 108 men from the battalion were commissioned by mid-October 1914. This led to increasingly desperate, but unsuccessful, attempts by its CO to stem the flow of other ranks leaving the battalion. (5) Less socially

(1) R.C. Sherriff, 'The English Public Schools in the War' in G.A. Panichas, (ed.) Promise of Greatness (London, 1968) pp.136-37.

(2) Haig-Brown, p.99.

(3) Unpublished account, p.13, P.G. Heath papers, DS/Misc/60, IWM.

(4) The Times 23 Sept. 1914, p.10; Simkins, Kitchener's Army pp.224-25.

(5) See correspondence in W032/11343, PRO; letter, nd, J.H. Hall, CAB 45/134, PRO.

prestigious units, such as the four northern Pals battalions of 93rd Brigade, were also rich sources of officers. (1)

Given the widespread belief that officer-like qualities were mainly to be found among the social elite, and the shortage of officers for both the peacetime and wartime army, it is strange that the War Office should authorise the raising of units such as the 16/Middlesex. It is stranger still that having sanctioned these units to be raised, they were not converted into officer training units along the lines of the Artists' Rifles. Instead, large numbers of potential officers were killed serving as privates. 'What would have not given' lamented Capt. Dible RAMC in late 1917,

to have had back the dead of the HAC, the London Scottish, the 9th HLI and other kindred battalions; every man in them of the best material for commissioned rank? (2)

The loss of such men was the penalty paid by the British army for operating a laissez faire, voluntary system of recruitment at the beginning of the war. However, it will be argued in this thesis that views such as Dible's overestimated the importance of the loss of such 'officer material', for their lower middle-class and working-class replacements were, generally speaking, just as effective as junior regimental officers.

4.5 The Process of Officer Selection

In the summer of 1915, a rumour that no more privates would be considered for commissions circulated among the men of 1/Coldm. Gds.(3) In reality, within a few months, a new system of officer recruitment was adopted which ensured that the vast majority of newly-commissioned officers had previously served in the ranks. This new system formally recognised the trend of commissioning from the ranks which had become apparent from at least early 1915 and was, of course, a

(1) Letter, 6 Nov. 1929, C. Howard, CAB 45/134, PRO.

(2) Diary, 20 Nov. 1917, p.60, J.H. Dible papers, IWM.

(3) Diary, 19 July 1915, H. Venables papers, LULLC.

reversal of prewar policy on officer recruitment.

As early as 16 September 1914, commanders of New Army divisions and brigades were given discretion to nominate men for commissions, who then joined their units in anticipation of their confirmation by the War Office.(1) A War Office circular of December 1914 stated that candidates could be accepted even if they were not trained to command men in the field, if they were 'otherwise suitable in all respects' to hold temporary commissions. On this occasion, no guidance was given on the criteria of suitability. (2)

In fact, commanding officers would have known exactly what criteria to apply to potential officers. Regular officers shared what has been described, in another context, as 'unspoken assumptions', or 'certain beliefs, rules or objectives which are taken for granted'.(3) In this case, it was assumed that potential officers had to be gentlemen, or at least possess enough social skills so that they would not disgrace themselves in an officers' mess or be ridiculed by the other ranks. These unspoken assumptions were not simply the product of snobbery, but also reflected the deeply-held belief that unless an officer was a gentleman he could not be an effective leader, and his men would not follow him willingly. A question posed in a set of instructions issued to commanding officers in France in late 1914 struck at the heart of the matter. If considering recommending a ranker for a commission, the commanding officer had to ask himself whether he would be prepared to 'accept him as an officer in his own unit'. (4) This concern for social standards was reflected by a man commissioned from the ranks of the Wiltshire Yeomanry in 1915, who asserted, tongue-in cheek, that provided the candidate did not pick his nose while being interviewed and swore that he hunted he was sure to be commissioned. It is

(1) A.O. 394, 16 Sept. 1914.

(2) Circular of 16 Dec. 1914, WO 162/2, PRO.

(3) J. Joll, '1914: The Unspoken Assumptions' in H. Koch (ed.) The Origins of the First World War (London, 1972 edn.) p.309.

(4) AROs, WD of Adjutant-General, GHQ, 22 Nov. 1914, WO 95/25, PRO.

interesting that he did not refer to military prowess as a criterion for officership.(1) This man was commissioned from a home service unit. In France, individuals had the opportunity to prove their leadership qualities on the battlefield.

In April 1915 a more detailed set of instructions was issued concerning candidates for commissions. Rankers had to possess 'adequate military knowledge', 'a public school education or its equivalent' and had to be under 27 years of age, except in 'exceptional circumstances'.(2) These criteria were to hold broadly true for the rest of the war. Stated more simply, the first criterion was considered fulfilled if the soldier demonstrated qualities of leadership, or at least had the potential to develop them. The possession of a public school education implied far more than educational achievement or even social status; it also suggested that a man was imbued with leadership qualities and noblesse oblige, and that he shared a certain set of social values. A further filter to prevent socially unacceptable men from becoming officers was provided by the need to supply references from public figures such as JPs or clergymen. Thus Pte. Percy Copson supplied two character references, including one from the former mayor of Northampton, with his application. (3)

In practice, the phrase 'a public school education or its equivalent' was capable of considerable elasticity in its interpretation. One brigade commander would satisfy himself of the educational qualifications of potential officers by asking them to spell the word 'Mediterranean'.(4) In late 1917 a letter from a headmaster was enough to satisfy the army that a ranker was fit, in educational terms, to be an officer. The essential part of one such letter, from the headmaster of Diamond School, Sunderland, simply stated that '[Cpl.

(1) R. Wilson, Palestine 1917 (Tunbridge Wells, 1987) p.29.

(2) WD, First Army A and Q, 22 April 1915, WO 95/181, PRO.

(3) Latham, p.38; letters in P.G. Copson papers, IWM.

(4) C.E. Jacomb, Torment (London, 1920) p.177.

William Allen]

left when in the Senior Class having done well in the various forms, and I consider that he is well qualified educationally to hold a commission in HM forces. (1)

This reliance on the subjective system of personal recommendations, rather than a formal, structured system for admitting men to officer training, was an extension of normal peacetime military practice, whereby patronage and personal connections played an important role in the career structures of British officers. (2) It could be a laborious process to obtain recommendation for officer training. A rather extreme example was recorded by a gunner serving in 48th Divisional artillery. In a letter of 24 August 1915 he recorded that he obtained permission from his sergeant to apply for a commission. The sergeant took him to see his section commander, with whom, in the would-be officer's words:

I had a talk over it (sic), and finally, I got his permission to be taken to the Colonel commanding 2nd battery...[who had] no say in the matter beyond recommending me to the Brigade Commander...he alone signs the forms finally - after seeing me - and he alone recommends me to the General- to be seen in turn by him, the latter being the Commander R.A. for the Division...(3)

Thus this man underwent a number of informal as well as formal interviews. In the infantry prospective officers were usually interviewed by their battalion and by their brigade commander, and often had a preliminary discussion with their platoon or company commander. This system was generally adopted after February 1916.(4) Likely men could be recommended for commissions even if they had not applied to become officers. By the spring of 1917, battalions had to furnish the names of five NCOs or privates suitable for commission every month.(5) Pte. G. Hall (13/York and Lancs) was informed by his company officer

(1) Letter in 'General Aspects: Officers/Officer Cadets' file, LULLC.

(2) See Travers, Killing Ground, chapter 1.

(3) 'Wagger', Battery Flashes (London, 1916) p.148.

(4) J. Greenshield, KRS Q; B. Williams, Raising and Training the New Armies (London, 1918) p.98.

(5) J. Terraine, (ed.), General Jack's Diary 1914-1918 (London, 1964) p.197.

that Hall had been recommended for a commission, and Hall's diffident protests that he was 'only a working lad' were overridden.(1) Although some soldiers saw the system as arbitrary, in general, it worked well.(2)

This chapter has shown how the social base of the officer corps of the British army was significantly widened during the Great War. The next chapter will take the story a stage further by examining how the army created officers from men who did not come from the traditional officer-providing classes.

(1) P.W. Turner and R.H. Haigh, Not for Glory (London, 1969) p.74.

(2) Diary, 6 Sept. 1916, G. Powell papers, 76/214/1, IWM.

Chapter 5

British Military Leadership 1914-18: Influences and Training

In this chapter, influences on the British concept of leadership will be discussed. Then the actual process of training officers will be examined.

5.1 The Nature of Leadership

Here it is appropriate to establish a theoretical framework for the study of the role of the British regimental officer of 1914-18. Leadership has been defined by W.D. Henderson as

the phenomenon that occurs when the influence of A (the leader) causes B (the group) to perform C (goal-directed behaviour) when B would not have performed C had it not been for the influence of A. (1)

This definition is useful, but incomplete. In 1927, F.C. Bartlett identified three broad categories of leaders:

- a) institutional leaders, 'who maintain their position by virtue of the established social prestige attaching to their office';
- b) dominant leaders, 'who maintain their position by virtue of their personal capacity to impress and dominate their followers';
- c) persuasive leaders, 'who maintain their position mainly by virtue of their personal capacity to express and persuade their followers'. (2)

Bartlett's work suggests that leadership involves more than the imposition of

(1) W.D. Henderson, Cohesion: The Human Element in Combat (Washington DC, 1985) p.111.

(2) F.C. Bartlett, Psychology and the Soldier (Cambridge, 1927) pp.138-39.

one individual's will on a reluctant group. In Correlli Barnett's words,

Leadership is a process by which a single aim and unified action are imparted to the herd. Not surprisingly it is most in evidence in times or circumstances of danger or challenge. Leadership is not imposed like authority. It is actually welcomed and wanted by the led.(1)

A combination of Henderson's and Barnett's assessments of leadership produces the following definition:

Leadership is the phenomenon that occurs when the influence of A (the leader) causes B (the group) to perform C (goal-directed behaviour) when B would not have performed C had it not been for the influence of A; the influence of A being generally welcomed by B.

Officers have five sources of influence over their men, influence being defined as the process by which A modifies the behaviour and attitudes of B, and power being defined as that which enables A to influence B.(2) These are:

- a) 'Resource' power, the ability to give rewards;
- b) 'Physical' or 'coercive' power;
- c) 'Institutional' power, that is, power which flows from the acceptance of a leader's hierarchical status;
- d) 'Personal' power, that is power which flows from the identification of the soldier with his officer, leading to the creation of ties of trust and admiration;
- e) 'Expert' power, the belief that the leader is professionally competent, and has the necessary expertise and information which makes him well-equipped to lead the unit.(3)

The ideal leader is one who relies mainly on personal and expert power. A poor

(1) Quoted in R. Holmes, Firing Line (London, 1985) p.340.

(2) C.B. Handy, Understanding Organisations (London, 1985) p.118.

(3) Henderson, Cohesion pp.111-14; Handy, pp.121-27.

leader is one who relies mainly on institutional and coercive power. Used wisely, the officer's influence can be instrumental in creating and sustaining morale, for certain factors which tended to undermine the ordinary soldiers' morale have emerged from sociological and psychological studies of men in combat:

1) Military service involves a loss of freedom, and better educated men feel status deprivation more strongly than ill-educated men.

2) Military service involves suffering personal discomfort, and often conveys the impression that the individual is a mere 'cog in the machine', powerless and impotent in the face of an impersonal and arbitrary coercive authority.

3) Military life involves isolation from accustomed sources of affection.

4) Individual rewards are subject to both poverty and uncertainty in the army, and 'job satisfaction' is often denied to the soldier.

5) Military service involves continual uncertainty, insecurity and inadequate cognitive orientation.(1)

Many of these factors can be alleviated by the existence of good officer-man relations and enlightened leadership. The leader has two main functions. Firstly, he helps to create and sustain unit cohesion. This is a broadly managerial function. The officer has to ensure that his men have sufficient supplies of food, drink and other essentials. He also has to exercise man-management, to prevent the alienation of the soldier, perhaps defending him against the unreasonable demands of higher authority. The officer also has to

(1) S.A. Stouffer et al, The American Soldier (New York, 1965 edn.) I, p.365; II, pp.77, 365; W.E. Hocking, Morale and its Enemies (New Haven, 1918) p.105.

detect and correct behaviour which deviated from group norms. Ultimate success could be judged by the achievement of cohesion, when the formal military unit became for its members a substitute for family, the core of their social and emotional lives. Secondly, the leader has to mould the cohesive group so that their goals are congruent with those of the greater organisation, the army; in short, he has to lead the group into battle.(1)

The interrelation of the two functions is demonstrated by a US army experiment of 1960. (2) Of four parties dispatched across the polar ice cap, two were placed on half rations. The underfed teams rejected the authority of their formal leaders, and developed resistance to them. These leaders, who equated to platoon officers, were placed in a difficult position. They were responsible for their groups, but were unable to provide adequate food or protect their men against the apparently unfair actions of the military hierarchy. Their men began to attempt to steal food, for cohesion is a two-edged weapon; survival of the group, rather than the accomplishment of the aims of the army (usually, combat missions) can become the object of some military primary groups. (3) The regimental officer is the vital link between the primary group and the army.

5.2 Influences on Leadership: The Cult of Athleticism

It was widely believed that there was a direct connection between the ethos of public schools, which emphasised the development of 'character' (the possession of the virtues of 'physical and moral courage, loyalty and co-operation

(1) Henderson, Cohesion pp.11-16.

(2) R.W. Seaton, 'Deterioration of Military Work Groups Under Deprivation Stress', in M. Janowitz, The New Military (New York, 1964) pp.225-49.

(3) The US Army in Vietnam suffered numerous problems of this type. See G. Lewy, America in Vietnam (New York, 1978) pp.155-6, 159.

and the ability both to command and obey' (1) and the ability to lead men in battle. In 1921 Col. C. Bonham-Carter commented that 'the gift of leadership' was 'almost a race inheritance among public schoolboys'. (2) A prominent industrialist, Sir Robert Waley Cohen, was reported as saying that a public school and university education produced men who were loyal to the organisation, and were able 'to get on with their subordinates by just treatment mixed with kindness' and treated their superiors 'with deference that does not deteriorate into subservience'.(3) It is not surprising that such members of the establishment should praise the public schoolboy. However, confirmation of their views comes from the pen of an individual who rebelled against the establishment: Richard Aldington.(4)

Aldington attended a public school, served in the ranks of the wartime army, and was later given a temporary commission. In his novel Death of a Hero (1929) Aldington draws a pen portrait of 'Lieutenant Evans', who was described as a typical public schoolboy, 'ignorant', 'inhibited' but '"decent" and good humoured'. He 'accepted and obeyed every English middle-class prejudice and taboo' and was totally convinced of his superiority to the working classes. Evans was xenophobic, sexually repressed, and philistine in his cultural tastes. (5) In sum, Evans was depicted as a living example of the values that Aldington despised as obsolete. Evans was also, as Aldington made clear, an excellent officer:

(1) J.A. Mangin, 'Athleticism: A Case Study of the Evolution of an Educational Ideology', in B. Simon and I. Bradley, The Victorian Public School (Dublin, 1975) p.147.

(2) C. Bonham-Carter, 'The Royal Military College, Sandhurst', AQ III, No.1, (1921) p.105.

(3) S. Foot, Three Lives - And Now (London, 1937) pp.11-12.

(4) See J. Morris, 'Richard Aldington and Death of a Hero - or Life of an anti-hero?' in H. Klein, ed., The First World War in Fiction (1978 edn.) pp. 183-92.

(5) R. Aldington, Death of a Hero (London, 1965 edn.) pp.285-86.

[Evans] was honest, he was kindly, he was conscientious, he could obey orders and command obedience in others, he took pains to look after his men. He could be implicitly relied upon to lead a hopeless attack and to maintain a desperate defence to the very end. There were thousands and tens of thousands like him.(1)

In short, Aldington believed that public schools produced ideal subalterns for the British army on the Western Front. Here it will be argued that Aldington was essentially correct, and furthermore, that public school values were successfully passed on to officers who had not attended public schools by a process of education, training and socialisation. As a result, the lower middle-class and working-class officers of the latter part of the war were imbued with much the same values as their public school educated predecessors. The public school ethos, described by a headmaster in 1913 as 'something essentially English' consisting of 'a sense of honour, of esprit de corps, and...a spirit of self-sacrifice' (2) therefore influenced far more officers than had actually attended a public school.

Judging by the problems experienced by the Edwardian army in attracting officers, public schools might appear to have been inefficient instruments of militarisation. However, the inculcation of values of officership by overt means, such as compulsory service in the OTC, was less effective than other, less tangible factors such as athleticism, the classics, and the concept of chivalric gentlemanliness and self-sacrifice, all of which were very much a part of the public school ethos. The Victorian and Edwardian public school has been the subject of much attention in the last few years. Here it is not intended to duplicate the work of other writers, but rather to discuss some aspects of their work relevant to the officer-man relationship in the Great War.

(1) Ibid p. 286.

(2) Quoted in D. McCarthy, Gallipoli to the Somme (London, 1983) p.39. This headmaster also recognised that the public school spirit could also lead to snobbishness.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the notion that sport was a useful training for war was almost universally accepted. Its most famous manifestation is probably Newbolt's poem 'Vitai Lampada', in which public school cricket is explicitly linked with military leadership. Games were seen as useful for two purposes. Firstly, they produced the 'character' necessary for leadership. The playing of sport channelled aggression into co-operation, taught self- and corporate-discipline, made boys physically fit and created team spirit. By teaching boys to take rapid decisions on the playing field, games prepared them to take similar decisions on the battlefield. On the sportsfield, as on the battlefield, boys learned to take risks and to disregard their personal safety. Team games, declared Haig in 1919, required

decision and character on the part of the leaders, discipline and unselfishness among the led, and initiative and self-sacrifice on the part of all.

Haig went on to claim that the 'inspiration' of games 'has brought us through this war, as it has carried us through the battles of the past'. (1)

In recent years the correlation between the cult of athleticism and military leadership has been questioned. Geoffery Best, although generally critical of the 'games ethic', recognises that games were useful as a means of inculcating loyalty to the group, be it the team, school, regiment or Empire. (2) Peter Parker is dismissive of the whole concept, suggesting that obsessive devotion to the public school, or the house, detracted from loyalty to nation. Moreover, Parker argued that a games player might be able to command respect from his peers but it did not necessarily follow that he would be respected by strangers in the army, and the cult of the athlete encouraged boys to work for individual, rather than group goals. (3)

(1) Sir D. Haig, A Rectorial Address Delivered to the Students in the University of St. Andrews, 14th May 1919 (St. Andrews, 1919) p.16.

(2) G. Best, 'Militarism and the Victorian Public School', in Simon and Bradley, pp.143-44. See also J. Gathorne-Hardy, The Public School Phenomenon (London, 1977) pp.144-56.

(3) P. Parker, The Old Lie (London, 1987) pp.83-84.

Parker's criticisms are overstated. J.D. Burns, a Great War subaltern who attended an Australian public school, argued in his school magazine that loyalty to the school was the first stage in the development of a more mature code of loyalty. Later, Burns argued, horizons widen and 'patriotism for the Empire will succeed, though not replace, loyalty to the school'.(1) Parker's second argument ignores the fact that the public schoolboy, on joining the army, would find himself in an organisation that, like his school, placed a high degree of emphasis on sport, and in which sporting prowess was greatly prized. The individual would very soon have an opportunity to win the respect of his fellow officers on the sportsfield. He would also be well placed to win the respect of his soldiers, for interest in sport was by no means confined to the social elite. Watching and playing sport, especially Association football, was one of the principal forms of working-class leisure in the early twentieth century. On the Western Front sport was important as a recreational activity for the British working man in uniform. A Regular officer noted in his diary in August 1914 that 'The men spent the evening in their usual manner, kicking a football about', while in June 1915 a popular paper devoted a double page spread to a picture of a typical scene of men 'resting' behind the lines by playing football.(2)

In the later nineteenth century former public schoolboys codified sport. Football was converted from a rough-and-tumble into a disciplined activity conducted according to carefully defined rules. Thus the public school games ethic, in a diluted form, influenced the working classes.(3) It is not surprising that in the autumn of 1914, the football stadium proved to be fertile ground for the recruiting officer.(4) An indication that sporting

(1) Memorial booklet pp. 4, 9, J.D. Burns papers, LULLC. The Australian public school system closely followed the British model. See chapter 9 below.

(2) Diary, 15 Aug. 1914, T.S. Wollcombe papers, RMASL; The Graphic 5 June 1915, pp.726-27.

(3) J. Walvin, Leisure and Society (London, 1978) pp.83-96.

(4) Yorkshire Post 2 Sept. 1914.

fanaticism was by no means confined to the upper echelons of society, and that a mutual interest in sport could bring officers and men together, is offered by the fact that a soldier thought it essential to bring his officer news of the 1915 FA Cup Final during a tense moment in the second battle of Ypres.(1)

The idea that sport encouraged the boy to strive to achieve renown for himself, rather than to seek honour for the team, was refuted by Burns, who argued that the object of the athlete in training was not self-glorification but the 'setting of an example', this being the 'duty of each individual in the school'. (2) Other evidence would suggest that this was a common belief. (3)

Parker also attacks the notion that the cricket or rugby pitch was a valuable training ground for subalterns. He argues that the taking of decisions on the sportsfield and 'sporting strategy' (sic) are very different from the planning of actions on the battlefield and 'making snap decisions' that place men's lives at risk. Moreover, the discipline of the sportsfield could not be compared with that of the battlefield. To some extent, Parker is supported in these criticisms by Best. Superficially, these criticisms seem irrefutable; there is indeed a world of difference between football and war. Yet an examination of the British army on the Western Front leads to the conclusion that these criticisms are exaggerated, not least because leadership on the battlefield occupies a relatively small proportion of the military leader's time.

S. Sillars has suggested that one of the functions of the sporting imagery used in Ernest Raymond's immensely popular novel Tell England, which was originally published in 1922, was to provide psychological consolation for the bereaved. If grieving relatives of fallen public school subalterns could believe that the dead had regarded war, and death, in the same light as a cricket match, then this would provide them with some measure of consolation, however

(1) Diary, 25 Apr. 1915, T.S. Wollcombe papers, RMASL.

(2) Memorial booklet, p.4., J.D. Burns papers, LULLC.

(3) See for example P. Jones, War Letters of a Public School Boy (London, 1918) passim.

'spurious and limited', by helping them to make sense of the situation.(1) Similarly, sport helped young officers to avoid the stress caused by 'role ambiguity' (2) on joining his unit by helping the newcomer to make sense of that situation by relating it to a familiar experience. The young officer, faced by his platoon for the first time, was able to fall back on his experience in a sporting team. One extremely effective leader of men, the product of a public school, was 'convinced' that games developed 'the ability to deal with and handle men in later years'.(3)

Military leadership involves far more than just combat. One very important field of responsibility for the regimental officer was that of training of men. Throughout the war drafts arrived at frontline units having received only the sketchiest of training at home depots.(4) As early as the autumn of 1914, Regular battalions were complaining about the poor quality of the training of the reservists that they were receiving.(5) Four years later, the 1/KRRC, a nominally Regular unit, reported itself as 'Badly off for Lewis Gunners and also NCOs with any experience at all...a large number of our new draft are only just 19 years old and out for the first time'. (6)

Changing tactical situations also called for the officers to retrain their men, especially during the re-emergence of mobile warfare in 1918. An officer, wounded in 1917, returned to France in October 1918 to be 'astonished' to find

(1) S. Sillars, Art and Survival in First World War Britain (New York, 1987) pp.136-37.

(2) Handy, pp.60-2, 79.

(3) Carton de Wiart, p.14.

(4) Lt.Gen. Sir I. Maxse, 'Hints on Training. Preface', in Notes for Commanding Officers (Aldershot, 1918) pp. 12-15; XV Corps. Notes on Minor Tactics Compiled from Lectures to Company Officers p.3, RMASL.

(5) 23 Oct. 1914, WD, 1/R.I. Rifles, WO95/1730, PRO.

(6) 20 Mar. 1918, WD, 1/KRRC, WO95/1371, PRO.

how profoundly the nature of warfare had changed. (1) Writing of the fighting on the Marne in July 1918, the commander of 62nd Division confessed that 'these operations were practically our first experience of open fighting'. (2) Mobile warfare exposed any lack of appropriate training and made hasty improvisation necessary. A typical formation, 17th Division, reported that in August 1918 that its troops were suffering from:

lack of tactical knowledge, which resulted in formations not being adapted to suit ground, and lack of power to apply the principle of fire covering movement, also lack of intelligent patrolling. (3)

Junior officers were often thrown back on their own resources and imaginations to train their men for a type of warfare for which they were themselves ill-prepared. (4) They naturally drew upon their own sporting experiences for inspiration, encouraged by official enthusiasm for sport as a training aid. The training for the assault that was officially recommended in the autumn of 1917, for instance, was heavily influenced by sport. The training scheme began with basics, such as jumping over a trench and bayonet fighting; the latter was often included as an event in unit sports meetings. Later stages of training included assault courses and other exercises. The spirit in which they were approached is indicated by some instructions included in an official manual, which insisted that 'there is a close analogy between cricket and an exercise of this kind'; the 'players play the game under the agreed laws, and under the orders of their Captain...the platoon commander', the umpires adhere

(1) E. Parker, Into Battle 1914-18 (London, 1964) p.93.

(2) Letter, 13 Sept. 1933, W. Braithwaite, CAB 45/126, PRO.

(3) Operations of 17th Division from 21 August 1918 to 11 November 1918 p.1, Conf.3355, SCL. For details of another division's ad hoc training in this period, see Anon, A Short History of the 19th (Western) Division 1914-1918 (London, 1919) p.100.

(4) C.N. Barclay, Armistice 1918 (London, 1968) pp.95-98.

strictly to their allotted role, and the spectators 'keep away from their pitch'.(1) Furthermore, in order to maintain interest and to encourage esprit de corps, it was recommended that some training exercises were turned into competitive events, so that, for instance, No.1 Section took on No.2 Section on the rifle range, just as on another occasion the same sub-units would play each other at football. An official pamphlet of 1918 recommended competitions 'in Lewis and Machine Gun Practice, Revolver Shooting and Musketry, Bayonet Fighting, Assault Training, Wiring, Yukon Pack Carrying, etc'. (2) By treating training as a type of sporting activity, officers attempted to make training interesting and comprehensible to their fellow sports enthusiasts in the ranks.

Moving from training to the battlefield, the Edwardian belief that sport was essential training for military leadership was a development of a much older belief in the importance of hunting. In the eighteenth century, for instance, advocates of the chase were using very similar arguments to those used by Edwardian sportsmen: that hunting toughened the individual, and developed courage, coup d'oeil and leadership qualities. (3) Such views were far from dead in the Great War. One 'fire-eating' gunner officer described combat in terms of hunting. In a volume published shortly after the war, he paid tribute to his 'stout hearted men' who had proved 'good partners...in the game of killing the Hun'.(4)

In the period of trench-warfare, patrols into No Man's Land and trench raids gave subalterns their main opportunities to show initiative.(5) The similarities

(1) Assault Training, September 1917 SS 185, (Sept. 1917.) pp.5-6, 15.

(2) XV Corps Notes pp.5-6; Notes and Hints on Training (Jan. 1918) p.6, RMASL.

(3) C. Duffy, Military Experience in the Age of Reason (London, 1987) pp.49-50, 140-41.

(4) N. Fraser-Tytler, With Lancashire Lads and Field Guns in France, 1915-18 (Manchester, 1922) p.8, 144, 140.

(5) T. Ashworth, Trench Warfare 1914-1918 (London, 1980) pp.70-98.

between sport and raiding were often noted by contemporaries. There was the obvious relationship between stalking and carrying out stealthy operations; (1) and cricket can be seen as a 'tamed' version of stalking. The language used to report in an account of raid carried out by 5th and 7th Battalions CEF is revealing. The writer asserted that the men practised for the attack 'with the same relish as if training for a football match', and mentions that an officer commanding an attacking party was 'a footballer'. This piece of information appears irrelevant until it is seen in the context of the belief that raiding was an extension of sport, with similar training and tactics being used for both activities. (2) On occasions, raids appear to have become another form of sporting contest between rival British units.(3)

When viewed against this background, the provision of footballs by Capt. W.P. Nevill for his company of 8/E. Surreys to kick into action on 1 July 1916 becomes comprehensible. Far being an act of public school bravado or the ludicrous action of a man obsessed with sport (4) it can be seen as a shrewd psychological stroke. Nevill intended the footballs to distract his men from the terrors of their baptism of fire.(5) It is arguable that the use of football on this and other occasions (6) also helped soldiers to make sense of a new and terrible experience by presenting it in terms which they were immediately able

(1) For a good description of a patrol see E.C. Vaughan, Some Desperate Glory (London, 1985 edn.) pp.120-21.

(2) J.E. Edmonds, Military Operations, France and Belgium, 1916, I, Appendices, Appx. 6. pp.43, 46.

(3) Report of the Committee on the Lessons of the Great War (War Office, Oct. 1932) p.24, WO32/3116, PRO.

(4) Parker, pp.213-15; C. Veitch, '"Play up! Play up! and Win the War": Football, the Nation and the First World War 1914-15', JCH, 20,(1985) pp.363-64.

(5) G.H.F Nichols, The 18th Division In the Great War (Edinburgh, 1922) p.40; J.R. Ackerly, My Father and Myself (Harmondsworth, 1971 edn.) p.50.

(6) P. MacGill, The Great Push (London, 1916) p.73 (London Irish at Loos, 25 Sept. 1915); Letter, R. Grieg, 22 Apr. 1930, CAB 45/134, PRO (16/R. Scots on Somme, 1 July 1916).

to comprehend; football 'was the common thread which bound together a group of men facing the most severe challenge of their lives'.(1) Far from being a ludicrous anachronism, the public school games ethic played a important role in the war on the Western Front.

5.3 Nobility and Sacrifice: Chivalry, the Classics, and Popular Fiction

Mark Girouard has argued that the nineteenth century saw the resurgence of the concept of chivalry, or at least a reinterpretation of it. Chivalry, although based on an idealised view of the knightly code of the middle ages, had by 1914 metamorphosed into the concept of gentlemanliness. Chivalry can be defined as a code of conduct which stressed honour, bravery, loyalty, courtesy, generosity, mercy and self-sacrifice. From the mid-nineteenth century, this code was transmitted via the reformed public schools, and thus came to be the dominant ethos of the upper-middle and upper classes. Games were a manifestation of this; they taught, it was believed, gentlemanly virtues, and were thus morally uplifting. In Girouard's words, 'the Victorians selected the qualities which they admired in chivalry and remodelled games in the light of them'. (2)

Not the least influence of sport on the subalterns of 1914-18 was the fact that they were thoroughly imbued with a sense of responsibility towards other members of their team; a concept that, in the army, readily translated into paternalistic responsibility for the well-being of their men. Two events that took place shortly before the Great War admirably demonstrated the code of the chivalric gentleman. Capt. Oates of 6th (Inniskilling) Dragoons,

(1) Veitch, p.364.

(2) M. Girouard, The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman (London, 1981) pp.7, 16, 235.

who walked out into the snow on Scott's ill-fated polar expedition of 1912, and the male passengers on the sinking ocean liner Titanic who, having given up their places in the lifeboats to women and children, calmly awaited death, were examples of gentlemen who had sacrificed their lives for the good of the larger group.(1) As in the medieval version of chivalry, the code of self-sacrifice was bound up with Christianity. Christ's dictum that 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends' (John 15:13) dove-tailed neatly with chivalric ideals. The result was a view of life summarised by the Latin tag Dulce et Decorum est Pro patria mori: it is sweet and right to die for one's country.

For much of the war, the British subaltern was not expected to be an expert tactician, but rather was expected to exercise what might be termed 'inspirational' command. In the words of one such officer, 'in a defensive battle his duty was to persuade his men to hold the position or die in the attempt'; (2) in an offensive battle, he had to lead his men forward. Chivalric influences, ingested via the public school, pulpit and sportsfield, left the young men who served as subalterns in the trenches with little doubt as to the standards expected of gentlemen placed in command of men who were fighting for their country. One of many indications of the extent to which chivalric ideals were seen as relevant to modern warfare can be seen in the church of St. Michael the Archangel, Lyme Regis, Dorset, where there is a memorial window to 25-year-old Capt. G.H. Bickley of the Devons. The stained glass depicts various scenes including a knight in armour kneeling in vigil, and another knight receiving the Holy Grail from an angel. In sharp and ironic contrast to the

(1) Ibid pp.3-6, 8, 233-35.

(2) C.N. Barclay, Armistice 1918 (London, 1968) p.95.

mystical imagery of his memorial, Bickley was killed near Ypres on 4 October 1917 while attached to 236 Machine Gun Company, a unit created to make use of advanced technology, fighting in a battle that has come to symbolise twentieth century techniques of industrial warfare.(1) As late as 1973 a public school officer could write about the Great War in chivalric terms. (2) An equally powerful testimony is that of Wilfred Owen's poem 'Dulce et Decorum est' which is a denunciation of 'The old Lie' that underpinned the chivalric code of self-sacrifice.(3) The bitterness of this poem can only be understood if placed in the context of the Weltanschauung of the average public school educated subaltern.

A further factor relevant to a study of the influences of British officers of the Great War was the Greek heroic tradition. The public school curriculum was dominated by the classics. Not surprisingly, the classics had an enormous impact on the public school ethos. The classical heroes, particularly those of Homer's epics, were seen as role models for boys. Even in 1935, a classical scholar who had grown to manhood in the nineteenth century could write that 'There are worse ways of educating a boy than to familiarise his mind from childhood with great tales of splendid deeds and heroic men'. (4) Indeed, one authority has argued that there were distinct similarities between Edwardian Britain and Homeric Greece, particularly in the great respect given in both societies to military and political heroes. The generation of 1914 was 'profoundly Homeric', and 'in Homer, the hero was a warrior'.(5) The extent to

(1) Personal observation.

(2) V.F. Eberle, My Sapper Venture (London, 1973) p.22.

(3) W. Owen, 'Dulce et Decorum est', in B. Gardner (ed.) Up the Line to Death (London, 1976 edn.) pp.141-42.

(4) T.R. Glover, The Ancient World (Harmondsworth, 1944 edn.) p.28.

(5) R.M. Ogilvie, Latin and Greek (London, 1964) pp.136, 143.

which public schoolboys were soaked in the Iliad and Odessey can be gauged from a perusal of memoirs of the period. The Dardanelles campaign, fought almost in sight of the remains of Troy, brought forth a particularly fine crop of Homeric allusions.(1) The Western Front also inspired references to ancient Greece. One came from the pen of Stephen Graham, who served in the ranks of the Scots Guards. Graham returned to Ypres shortly after the war and in describing a monument in Polygon Wood referred to Thermopylae; an allusion that he took for granted would be understood by his educated readership. (2) While men who read the classics for pleasure were probably in a minority, even non-intellectual former public schoolboys were influenced by classical and heroic traditions, so deeply were they imbedded in the British public school ethos.(3)

There were three major ways in which the classics influenced the officer-man relationship in the British army of 1914-18. Firstly, the study of Homer, Caesar and the like ensured that a great part of the schoolboy's time was spent reading texts that dealt with issues of war rather than peace, reinforcing the notion that leadership in war was a natural part of the gentleman's duty. Secondly, because the concept of chivalry was extended back into the classical era (Plato was once described as 'the greatest of gentlemen'), it gave support to the concept of the leader as a gentleman, with all that implied in terms of paternalism.(4) Finally, it reinforced the belief that the leaders of society should be warriors, who physically led their men into battle. Hector, Achilles,

(1) See for example C. Mackenzie, Gallipoli Memories (London, 1929) pp.65-66; A. Herbert, Mons, Anzac and Kut (London, nd) p.169.

(2) S. Graham, The Challenge of the Dead (London, 1921) p.22.

(3) T. King, 'The Influence of the Greek Heroic Tradition on the Victorian and Edwardian Military Ethos', unpublished paper given to BCMH conference, 6 Apr. 1991.

(4) Girouard, p.66; R.W. Livingstone, (ed.) The Legacy of Greece (London, 1921) p.143.

or for that matter Alexander the Great, were not generals who calmly directed a battle from a safe distance in the rear. They were warriors who fought hand-to-hand with their enemies.(1) A further, subsidiary influence of one classical tradition, the Spartan, was that the harsh regime at public schools, of which it was once claimed would have 'produce[d] an immediate revolution if applied to the masses', was intended to toughen future leaders.(2)

The influence of the classics to modern Britain began to be challenged in the years following the war. Livingstone's Legacy of Greece, a defence of the subject, was published in 1921 in response to the new trend. However, the continuing popular influence of the classical tradition and concepts of military leadership is demonstrated by the success of Raymond's novel Tell England, which was made into an immensely popular film in 1930. Set partly at a public school, and partly on Gallipoli, the title is a deliberate echo of the epitaph of the Spartans who died at Thermopylae. The final frame of the film shows a gravestone inscribed with the epitaph:

Tell England, ye who pass this monument
We died for her, and here we rest content.

Thus through the pages of a successful novel and a feature film the traditions of classical and modern warfare were explicitly linked. To continue Sillars' thesis, it is possible that a reason for the success of the film was that, by reaffirming heroic values, it offered psychological consolation to the bereaved at a time when the whole concept of glory and self-sacrifice in war was under

(1) See King. For an example, see Homer, (M. Hammond, translator) The Iliad: A New Prose Translation (Harmondsworth, 1987) p.271.

(2) Mosley, p.28. For a similar claim about the harshness of life at a public school, see L.P. Hartley, 'Three Wars', in G.A. Panichas, Promise of Greatness (London, 1968) pp.253-54.

attack from the 'disillusioned' school of novelists. (1)

There are other aspects of the public school ethic which could be discussed, such as muscular, evangelical Christianity, but here only one other influence, that of popular writing, will be examined. The approved reading of middle- and upper-class boys tended to purvey militaristic and paternalistic values. Magazines such as Young England and the Boy's Own Paper (BOP) published articles designed to teach affluent readers their responsibilities towards the poor. In an article of 1906, for instance, a clerical writer stressed that noblesse oblige was a sacred duty:

Christ taught that the strong should support the weak, and all should care for those who cannot help themselves.

In 1915 the BOP carried a typical article which featured the work of the Shaftesbury Society and the Ragged School Union. The author was explicit in his propagandistic aim in writing:

[If] every bright Lad of Advantage would be a Big Brother to every Lad of Disadvantage, the occupation of the Ragged School Union would be gone. It would have no *raison d'être*. (2)

In terms of sales, G.A. Henty was the most important boy's writer of the late nineteenth century, selling about 25 million books by 1914. His historical adventure stories, which were often concerned with war, offered role models for young military leaders. The protagonist was usually a boy of 15 or 16 who learns about the responsibilities of leadership during the course of his adventures. (3) Sometimes leadership is expressed outside the context of the army. In 'The Old Pit Shaft; A Tale of the Yorkshire Coalfields' the themes

(1) Raymond, Tell England pp.273, 314; E. Raymond, The Story of My Days (London, 1968) pp.122-3, 162; J. Richards, Visions of Yesterday (London, 1973) pp.153-4.

(2) Quoted in Sheffield, 'Effect of War Service', p.59.

(3) G. Arnold, Held Fast for England (London, 1979) pp.17, 31-34.

of courage, self-sacrifice and leadership are expressed as clearly as in the purely military tales. An assistant engineer heroically rescues a beautiful maiden after his cowardly and working-class rival in love had run away rather than risk his own life. The implication is clearly that the former was a chivalric gentleman, while the latter was not.(1)

Henty was merely the most successful writer in the genre. His many rivals and imitators also propagated the militaristic elements of the public school ethos. An anonymous story, 'A Boy's First Fight' depicts the battle of Waterloo through the eyes of a seventeen-year-old subaltern. This story features a paternalistic quartermaster who attends to the material needs of the rankers, and courageous, phlegmatic and self-sacrificing officers and NCOs who offer leadership at the crisis of the battle. The rankers demonstrate their 'affectionate regard' for their wounded colonel. Heroism and dedication to duty enable the youthful subaltern, and indeed the British army, to overcome all difficulties and defeat the French.(2)

A writer possibly even more influential than Henty in shaping the ethos of the officers of the Great War was Rudyard Kipling. It was largely through his work that the general public gained their impression of both the private soldier and the subaltern, although Kipling's military tales were based on his time in India in the 1880s, and army life had changed somewhat in the intervening years. He was also an advocate of the militarisation of British society. One story, published in the aftermath of the Boer War, depicts the entire British nation in

(1) G.A. Henty, 'The Old Pit Shaft: A Tale of the Yorkshire Coalfields' in G.A. Henty et al, Hazard and Heroism (London, 1904) pp.53-66. For a typical Henty book with a specifically military theme, see In Times of Peril (London, 1881). Interestingly, the copy examined for this thesis came from the library of an Indian army officer who fought in the Great War.

(2) Anon, 'A Boy's First Fight', in Hazards and Heroism pp.317-42.

arms.(1)

Kipling's subalterns were characterised by a moral code emphasising stoicism, self-denial, obedience, loyalty to the Regiment and to their men, and adventurousness. (2) In 'Only a Subaltern', published in 1895, Kipling created 'Bobby Wick', the ideal junior officer, a boy/man whose devotion to his men was so complete that he died of cholera after nursing a private suffering from the disease. By giving prominence to private soldiers as characters in his stories, Kipling added another dimension to the portrait of the perfect officer. Kipling's Tommies eloquently admire officers who are liberally endowed with public school values. At the end of 'Only a Subaltern', the soldier nursed by Bobby Wick assaults a fellow private who failed to show sufficient sorrow at Wick's death, uttering the words 'Hangel! Blooming Hangel! That's wot 'e is!'. (3) Kipling's message was clear. Applying the public school ethos to military leadership was effective. Paternal, courageous, self-sacrificing officers earned the loyalty and love of their men.

In Puck of Pook's Hill (1906) Kipling's ideals reached their apotheosis. Parnesius, centurion of the Thirtieth Legion, who despite being abandoned by Rome and deprived of reinforcements doggedly defended Hadrian's Wall against the assaults of the barbaric 'Wing Hats', exemplifies devotion to duty and self-sacrifice. The Parnesius section of the book depicts junior officers continuing to do their duty when ~~their~~ superiors have failed to do theirs. By holding their position when surrounded, by fighting on with no thought of

(1) R. Kipling. 'The Army of a Dream', in Traffics and Discoveries (London, 1904) pp.243-300.

(2) M. Edwardes, 'Oh to meet an Army Man', in J. Gross (ed.) Rudyard Kipling: the man, his work and his world (London, 1972) p.40.

(3) R. Kipling, 'Only a Subaltern', in Wee Willie Winkie (London, 1920 edn.) pp.101-20. See also the comments of Pte. Mulvaney in R. Kipling, 'The God from the Machine', in Soldiers Three (London, 1911 edn.) pp.6,9.

surrender, they saved the province of Britain from the invaders. (1)

It is notoriously difficult to establish the degree of influence that ideas have on the conduct and opinions of individuals. In the case of the extent of the influence of Kipling's views on qualities of officership, the career and opinions of one man, Charles Carrington, offers a valuable guide. Carrington was an upper-middle class boy of seventeen when the war broke out in 1914. After a brief spell in the ranks in England, he was commissioned, and served for most of the war in 1/5 R. Warwicks. After the war he wrote a number of books, including his war memoirs and a life of Kipling. In the latter book, and in letters and conversation with the present author, Carrington evaluated the influence that Kipling had had on his concept of officership.

Puck of Pook's Hill was published when Carrington was at the impressionable age of nine years old: Kipling's son, John, the model for Dan in Puck, was Carrington's exact contemporary. Nine years later John, and thousands of boys like him, were serving as subalterns on the Western Front. In 1955 Carrington claimed that nothing else in the Kipling canon was 'more effective in moulding the thought of a generation' than the Parnesius stories. Certainly, the story was strangely prophetic. It took but a short leap of the imagination to see the Wall as the Western Front, and the Wing Hats as the Germans; and Kipling's Roman officers spoke, thought and acted very much like Edwardian subalterns. The Roman stories, Carrington believed, 'strengthened the nerve of many a young soldier in the dark days of 1915 and 1941'.(2)

In retrospect, Carrington saw Kipling's fictional subalterns, and the real

(1) R. Kipling, Puck of Pook's Hill (Harmondsworth, 1987 edn.) pp.102-61.

(2) C. Carrington, Rudyard Kipling: His Life and Work (Harmondsworth, 1970 edn.) pp.446-47. See also Carrington to author, 10 Sep. 1983.

junior officers of 1914-18, as part of a long English tradition of the boy officer which included the Black Prince at Crecy, Chaucer's squire, and boy ensigns such as James Wolfe at Dettingen. (1) Thus Kipling was tapping a long tradition when he created his exemplary subalterns. Kipling, Carrington argued, had 'moulded a whole generation of young Englishmen' in the form of Bobby Wick.

They rose up in their thousands in 1914, and sacrificed themselves in the image that Kipling had created.(2)

John Kipling, killed while serving as a subaltern in the Irish Guards at Loos in 1915, was among their number.

Writing in 1940, George Orwell, who was at Eton during the Great War, argued that from their earliest days, the majority of the middle-classes 'are trained for war...not technically, but morally'.(3) It is difficult to disagree with this conclusion. The average Edwardian public schoolboy would have had to have been strong-willed indeed to resist the range of militaristic cultural influences that have been summarised in this section under the heading of the 'public school ethos'.

5.4 Officer Training 1914-18

This section and the next will examine the ways in which the public school ethos, or at least those elements of it relevant to military leadership, were passed on to officer cadets who had not attended a public school. It is important to note that such men did not begin officer training totally ignorant of the public school ethos, for in the next chapter it will be argued that it also affected the thinking of lower-middle and even working-class youths.

(1) Carrington to author, 18 Aug. 1983; conversation with author 24 Feb. 1984.

(2) Carrington, Kipling p.152.

(3) G. Orwell, 'My Country Left or Right', in S. Orwell and I. Angus, (eds.) The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell I, (Harmondsworth, 1970 edn.) p.589.

In the autumn of 1914, training for junior officers was usually conducted within the unit, with subalterns learning the rudiments of drill and the like at the same time as privates. Some units and formations made their own arrangements. In 16th (Irish) Division candidates for commissions were interviewed by the divisional commander. Those successful applicants who lacked military experience were told to enlist in 7/Leinsters, which had a 'candidates company'. If they proved themselves fit to become officers, their names were forwarded for commissioning. In November 1914, this company contained 50 'excellent young fellows'. They attended lectures given to officers and had certain privileges, but remained in the ranks. (1) 161 cadets graduated from this company to become officers in 16th Division between November 1914 and December 1915.(2)

W.P. Nevill of 8/E. Surreys was luckier than many temporary subalterns in that he was sent on a junior officers' course at Staff College in November 1914. His description of a typical day's work conveys something of the intensity of the course. Parade was at 6.55am, which was followed by bayonet fighting and PT before breakfast. This was followed by musketry instruction, and lectures on military topography and tactics, and then more drill. Then there was a pause, followed by another lecture on 'organisation' at 6.00pm. The evening was spent copying up rough notes. In early 1916 Nevill was sent on a course at Third Army Infantry School which was 'almost identical to the one I had at the Staff College, when I started'. (3)

An attempt to restore some order to the process of officer training came in

(1) Parsons to War Office, 29 Nov. 1914, Sir L.W. Parsons papers, LHCMA.

(2) T. Denman, Ireland's Unknown Soldiers, (Dublin, 1992) p.43. For the background to the establishment of the cadet company, see ibid pp.42-46, 59-60.

(3) Letters, 30 Nov. 1914, 14 Feb. 1916 W.P. Nevill papers, WPN/2, WPN 149, IWM.

January 1915. From this date NCOs and other ranks who were recommended by their commanding officers were sent on four week courses organised by OTCs and by units such as the Artists' Rifles and the Inns of Court. If they passed their course, they were sent for further training at a Young Officers' Company (YOC) attached to a reserve brigade, before being sent on to their units. Some men from civilian life also went to a YOC where they experienced 'fundamental army discipline'.(1) Later in 1915 YOCs were grouped together in threes, in an attempt to ensure a uniform standard of instruction.(2)

By Army Council Instruction 357 of 14 February 1916 a series of Officer Cadet Battalions (OCB) were set up. This system of officer training endured until the end of the war. The majority of the 107,929 temporary officers who were commissioned from February 1916 first served in the ranks and then passed the four month OCB course. In addition, Sandhurst and Woolwich continued to commission small numbers of Regular officers. It remained possible to take a commission without having first served in the ranks of an ordinary unit, or at least in an OTC, for some 'specially qualified young men' fresh from civilian life were sent to the Inns of Court or Artists' Rifles OTC for two months training in the ranks, before going on to an OCB for cadet training.(3) Of the 100 cadets of D Company, No. 14 OCB in September 1917, 51 had previously served with Inns of Court OTC. This disproportionate number is probably explained by the fact that this OCB was affiliated with the Inns of Court OTC and co-located in Berkhamstead.(4) The institution of the OCB system virtually ended the usefulness of the university OTCs, as the majority of their members were

(1) H.E.L. Mellersh, Schoolboy Into War (London, 1978) p.39.

(2) E.A. James, British Regiments, 1914-18 (London, 1978) p.119; Williams, Raising and Training pp.96-97.

(3) Statistics of the Military Effort p.235; Williams, Raising and Training p.99.

(4) The Barncroft Magazine (Berkhamstead, 1917) pp.5-8.

eligible for training at an OCB.(1)

The OCB system was perceived as possessing a number of advantages. One of the most important was that, as cadets were only commissioned upon successfully completing the course, unsuitable men could be returned to their units. Under the old system, it had proved extremely difficult to deprive unsuitable men of their temporary commissions.(2) On the whole, the OCB system was regarded as a success. One Territorial officer, for instance, commented on the noticeable improvement in the standard of officers after the system was introduced.(3)

Undoubtedly, some men applied to become officers simply to gain a few months respite from the trenches. A ranker of 8/Queen's with 'no great ambition' to be an officer was recommended for a commission in October 1918 and decided to accept it for the sake of a spell in England.(4) In mid-1915, the Artists' OTC was unpopular because the course, which was only five days long, was held in France, not England.(5) Against this should be set the evidence of genuine enthusiasm on the part of many cadets. At No.4 OCB a 'mutiny of patriotism' occurred in the spring of 1916 when a group of cadets wrote to the War Office requesting that an inefficient dugout officer be removed from the staff.(6) In November 1916 an instructor was howled down by the hard-bitten 'Expeditionary Force men' of No.9 OCB when he attempted to deliver a lecture that they considered insulted their intelligence.(7) One instructor at Inns of Court OCB noted that cadets could be difficult audiences, inclined to heckle during

(1) Williams, Raising and Training p.99.

(2) Ibid p.98-99.

(3) Henriques, p.79.

(4) Unpublished account, pp.87-87a, A.J. Abrahams papers, P.101, IWM.

(5) Smith, Four Years p.74.

(6) Unpublished account, p.34, N.A. Pease papers, 86/9/1, IWM.

(7) Unpublished account, p.59, R.W.F. Johnston papers, 82/38/1, IWM.

lectures.(1) In general, officer cadets were very well motivated: a 'very decent collection', as one instructor described them.(2)

The content of the various officer training courses remained fairly constant throughout the war. As a journalist commented in 1916, potential officers had an enormous number of subjects to master.(3) Drill, tactics, interior economy and military law were the staple fare. These topics were supplemented by lectures on recent military history: an officer who had served as a brigade-major at Mons gave a lecture on the battle at the Artists' OTC at Bailleul in March 1915, which much impressed his audience.(4) Contemporary international affairs were not neglected. In September 1916, in the middle of the battle of the Somme, time was found for a Cambridge don to lecture to the Cadets at GHQ Cadet School on Balkan history and the causes of the war.(5) The most obvious difference between an OCB course and that of prewar Sandhurst or Woolwich lay in the fact that officer cadets were not assumed to be leaders. Instead, at wartime OCBs leadership was regarded as a subject to be taught, along with drill and tactics. The remainder of this section will examine the ways in which leadership qualities were inculcated.

One of the primary motives of the course was to teach the officer cadets to think like an officer. This involved lifting the mental processes 'to a different plane of vision'.(6) In basic training, rankers were conditioned to obey orders in an unquestioning fashion. As officers, the same men had to issue orders and think for themselves. At the OCB a rather more genteel version of basic training took place, the aim being to wean cadets from the ranker's

(1) 'Ganpat', 'Fallen Angels', Blackwoods, CC, No.MCCIX, (1916) p.5.

(2) Unpublished account, p.7, R.E. Barnwell papers, 85/7/1, IWM.

(3) The Times 5 Jan. 1916.

(4) [D.H. Bell], A Soldier's Diary of the Great War (London,1929) pp.107-09.

(5) E. Shephard, A Sergeant-Major's War (Ramsbury, 1988 edn.) p.137.

(6) Williams, Raising and Training p.101.

mentality and to instil them with a version of the public school ethos. The change in posture from deferential ranker to officer and leader was summarised by an NCO instructor at an OCB at Keble College, Oxford, in July 1917, when he told his cadets that 'Soldiering is more than 'arf swank. You've got to learn to walk out as if the bloody street belonged to you.' (1)

Socialisation into the officer's role was an important part of the process. Many OCBs were held in Oxford and Cambridge colleges and in provincial universities such as Queen's, Belfast, and Bristol. One cadet wrote in late 1915 from Pembroke College, Cambridge that officer training involved hard work but 'I love this life - it is what I have always longed for - and it will be with feelings of regret that I leave it'. (2) Another described it as a 'priviledge' (sic) to be housed in Trinity.(3) At a time when there were very few students at Cambridge University, the members of the three OCBs housed in the colleges provided a semblance of normal undergraduate life, playing sport, indulging in amateur dramatics, and producing magazines.(4) Billeted in gracious surroundings very different from their peacetime environment, living a relatively carefree life far removed from the drudgery of the office or factory, many lower-class cadets proved particularly responsive to the need to play the role that was demanded of them.

Part of the process of socialisation was to teach the cadets to behave in a gentlemanly fashion. Officer cadets ate in a series of messes, and in one OCB the custom was for a member of the Directing Staff to sit at the mess table with

(1) Hooper, Letters p.63.

(2) Letter, 19 Dec. 1915, L. Emmerson papers, PP/MCR/152, IWM.

(3) Letter, 16 Apr. 1916, W.B. Medlicott papers, 87/56/1, IWM.

(4) H. Strachan, History of The Cambridge University Officers Training Corps (Tunbridge Wells, 1976) pp.145-46. See Barncroft Magazine for the undergraduate nature of OCB journals.

the cadets, looking out for standards of behaviour and etiquette. One of the lectures given at Inns of Court OTC at Berkhamstead in 1916 was on 'Military Etiquette'. According to the notes taken by one of the cadets, the lecturer, Capt. A.L. Bonham Carter, gave such advice as:

- a) Keep any 'lady' friends out of sight
- b) If you find it necessary to get drunk - go home in a cab and hide yourself
- c) bar unconventional dress (socks (fancy) with shoes....etc) (1)

Similarly, the commanding officer of No.5 OCB, based at Trinity College, Cambridge, lectured the cadets on correct behaviour and on one occasion publically complained that cadets had 'neglected to flush the WCs after use', and that a cadet 'had been seen in the college precincts with his arm round a girl's waist'. 'Neither ', he warned, 'must occur again!' (2) In this particular OCB such warnings seem to have been taken very much to heart, for a few months later the diary of 'Samuel Pepys, Cadet', a feature of the OCB magazine, noted that 'it is not seemly for a cadet to take the arm of a wench in the street'.(3)

The purpose of instruction of this kind was not simply to ensure that an officer did not disgrace himself and his uniform by slurping the soup in the mess, or by committing some other faux pas. Nor was it entirely a snobbish reaction to the perceived social shortcomings of so-called 'temporary gentlemen'. Rather, it was part of the army's pragmatic response to the shortage of officers from the traditional officer-providing classes. It was an attempt to manufacture passable imitations of gentlemanly officers by providing, via the medium of an intensive course, the kind of social training young men received in upper-class homes, at public schools and universities. The entire process was rooted in the belief that the only effective officers were those who possessed

(1) Notes of lecture of 3 Feb. 1916, C.R. Tobbit papers, 83/43/1, IWM.

(2) Letter, 29 Apr. 1916, W.B. Medlicott papers, IWM.

(3) Blunderbus, being the book of the 5th OCB, Trinity College, 2 (Nov. 1916) p.2.

certain qualities - in this thesis described as 'public school values'. By 1916, the well of genuine public school products had largely run dry. In 1909, during the debate on the shortage of officers, Sir Ian Hamilton had looked to the ranks of sports-playing, charismatic junior NCOs to supply additional officers for the army in wartime. (1) (See also chapter 2). Likewise, during the war the army took rankers who already demonstrated a measure of leadership potential and tried to turn them into officers by exposing them to the public school ethos in a concentrated form. Teaching potential officers how to behave at the dinner table was not directly relevant to making them leaders of men in the same way as, for instance, instruction in tactics, but nonetheless it was considered vital, for it was an article of faith that soldiers would only follow gentlemanly officers.

The prewar habit of treating potential officers in a similar fashion to recruits to the ranks was not entirely dispensed with. At the RHA barracks at St. John's Wood, London, the basic training for candidates fresh from civilian life (who included students, barristers, and dons among their ranks) emphasised the more unpleasant side of soldiering. There was plenty of cleaning and polishing, mucking out of stables with bare hands, 'physical jerks', drill, riding, some basic instruction in gunnery, and much shouting by NCOs. As with prewar Woolwich, no concessions were made to the social class of the recruits, or the fact that they were shortly to hold the King's commission.(2) One man who passed through St. John's Wood and then went on to Royal Artillery Cadet School at Exeter described the change as 'just like being transferred from a lunatic-asylum to a well-run public school'. The choice of words is significant.

(1) See Hamilton's comments in WO 163/15, PRO.

(2) Thorburn, Amateur Gunners pp.7-11; C.M. Bowra, Memories 1898-1939 (London, 1966) pp.71-74.

At Exeter, unlike St John's Wood, cadets were not treated as 'half-witted shirkers'. (1) Other men who passed through basic training establishments noted that they were treated very differently once they graduated to an OCB. While discipline was, initially at least, strict, (2) and all cadets, whether sergeant major or private, were reduced to the same level by the removal of rank badges, they were treated as gentlemen and potential officers. In sharp contrast to the RE signal service training centre, where he had previously trained, one cadet found that at the OCB at Berkhamstead he was encouraged to think of himself as an officer, and was 'treated as such'. (3) Harsh treatment during basic training ensured that many non-ranker officers commissioned after January 1916 had, like their Sandhurst-trained predecessors, an insight into the life of the ordinary soldier, however brief, that no doubt served to emphasise just how privileged officers were in comparison to the rank and file.

As noted above, unlike their prewar counterparts at Sandhurst or Woolwich, wartime cadets received instruction in leadership techniques. This is not to suggest that it was believed that anyone could be trained to be a leader. Like the modern British army, the army of 1915-18 had a functional approach to training leaders, believing that the job of the OCB was to 'bring out' inherent leadership abilities which had been previously detected in an individual. Not surprisingly, given the prevailing ethos, team games were seen as an essential tool for training leaders. Accounts of training at officer cadet units are littered with references to sport. (4) In 1917, No.4 OCB devoted two afternoons a week to sport. Naturally, extra-curricular sport was encouraged. The cadets of No.4 OCB, which was located at Hertford College, Oxford, obviously took

(1) Thorburn, pp.11,14.

(2) Unpublished account, p.34, N.A. Pease papers, 86/9/1, IWM.

(3) J.B. Scrivenor, Brigade Signals (Oxford, 1937) pp.18, 22-23. See also extract from privately printed memoir, pp.69-70, J.C. MacDermott papers, LHCMA.

(4) Letter, 4 Nov. 1916, T. Sherwood papers, IWM; Haigh and Turner, p.81.

full advantage of their hosts' sporting facilities by establishing a rowing club. (1)

One instructor recalled that the conduct of cadets on the football and rugby fields was regarded as a useful guide to their qualities as leaders: 'Those who played rough but not dirty, and had quick reactions, were the sort needed' and much of the staff's leisure time was taken up with playing sport with the cadets.(2) Cadets seemed to have recognised the importance of sport in their training. One, who trained with No.10 OCB, noted that his fellow cadets generally believed that good sportsmen were sure to pass their final examination. (3) Since team games encourage team-work and co-operation, while leaving room for individual acts of initiative and leadership, it can be argued that this emphasis on sport was not misplaced.

Cadets also had the opportunity to learn to be leaders on training exercises. By 1916, relatively sophisticated schemes were in use. The published diary of CSM Ernest Shepherd, (1/Dorsets) who trained at GHQ Cadet School, Blendecques, gives an interesting insight into the nature of tactical training. On 14 November 1916 Shepherd was appointed commander of a company serving as an advance guard. Shepherd had to make an appreciation of the ground, manoeuvre his command, and generally demonstrate his ability as a military leader. On the following day, his scheme and leadership was critically discussed by his peers at a plenary session. Shepherd began by stating his 'movements, intentions and results'. Then Shepherd's 'special critic', 'second in command and critic, each platoon commander and critic and the enemy commander and his critics' had their say. Finally, an officer instructor 'summed up, and said...the attack was a good success'.(4) Under the critical gaze of his peers, a cadet's limitations as

(1) F. Hawkings, (A. Taylor, ed.) From Ypres to Cambrai (Morley, 1974) p.111.

(2) R. Graves, Goodbye to All That (Harmondsworth, 1960 edn.) p.203.

(3) J. Greenshields, KRS Q.

(4) Shepherd, p.140.

a commander and a leader of men would be cruelly exposed. However, some regarded the command of cadets as a poor substitute for the command of 'real' soldiers. The average cadet at a YOC or an OCB had few opportunities to exercise his leadership on the genuine article, and the problem 'became increasingly difficult during the later periods of the war'.(1) On active service, rankers might be rather less amenable than fellow cadets.

Practical training in leadership was supplemented by lectures on paternalism. It was obviously impossible for cadets at a YOC or OCB to gain experience of the correct way for an officer to behave towards his men, and so practice gave way to theory. A standard lecture given to drafts of the Artists' Rifles before their dispatch to camp informed them that on eventually reaching their regiment

your first job is to get to know your men, look after them, study their interests and show you are one of them, taking a share in their pleasures and interests as well as their work. If you do this you will find that when the time comes they will follow you to hell...(2)

Such advice appears to have been fairly standard. During the course of a lecture on 'Duties of a Platoon Commmander', cadets at Inns of Court OTC were advised to take an interest in their men's affairs and to be their friend as well as their officer.(3) At an OCB in 1917 cadets were exhorted to 'Consider [the] man's point of view' and informed that 'An officer succeeds only as far as he lives up to his men's expectations of him'.(4) Lectures on discipline were also common.(5)

It can be seen that the British army responded in a pragmatic and eminently practical way to the shortage of public school educated officers. The officer

(1) Henriques, p.79. See also 'Ganpat', 'Fallen Angels', Blackwood's CC, No.MCCX, (1916) pp.172-3.

(2) Blomfield, pp.152-53.

(3) Notes of lecture, 3 Feb. 1916, C.R. Tobbit papers, 83/43/1, IWM.

(4) Officer training notebook, notes of lecture by Major Shaw, item 1123, Misc 74, IWM.

(5) Notes of lecture, 5. Jan. 1916, C.R. Tobbit papers, 83/43/1, IWM.

training system institutionalised the ethos of the prewar officer class and ensured that it was passed on to cadets who in many cases did not have a public school background. The OCB was a mixture of military training establishment and public school or Oxbridge college. In addition to training in military skills, cadets were taught how to behave in a gentlemanly fashion, how to think like leaders rather than followers, and, perhaps most importantly of all, to behave in a paternalistic fashion towards their men. The teaching of leadership was a new departure for the British army. A typical question which appeared on a final examination paper in December 1916 asked the candidate to imagine that his unit has been relieved from the trenches and that his men arrive, cold and wet, at their billets at midnight. The question asked 'Before going to your own quarters what will be your duties as platoon commander, with regard to your own platoon?'(1) A question of this nature would have had no place on an examination paper at prewar Sandhurst, but in a wartime context, such a question was designed to teach the paternalism and noblesse oblige which was the hallmark of the Regular officer.

The wartime system of officer training was widely regarded as a success. An officer who passed out from No. 17 OCB at Kinmel Park in 1917 described the training, which was intended to give cadets 'a full regard of responsibilities and all that it (sic) meant' as 'excellent'.(2) Another cadet, who had previously seen active service in the ranks, approved of the advice he received on how to look after his men as 'extremely practical'.(3)

The success of the OCB system was due in great part to the enthusiasm of the

(1) Examination paper 1, Military Law, Military Organisation and Interior Economy, Dec. 1916, 'Officers: Officer Cadets' file, LULLC.

(2) Unpublished notes, pp.8-9, B.D. Parkin papers, 86/57/1, IWM.

(3) Latham, p.40.

cadets themselves. Many ex-rankers would, of course, have had personal experience of the importance of paternal officers to the well-being of soldiers in the trenches. The wish to avoid being sent back to their units, or in the case of men fresh from civilian life, being drafted as a private, was an obvious incentive to do well, for by no means everyone passed the course.

However, many seemed to have internalised the demands of the course, that is adopted them as part of their personal outlook, achieving a high level of commitment to the concept of officership that they were taught at OCBs.(1) The writer C.S. Lewis commented not unsympathetically on his fellow cadets at Keble College, Oxford, in June 1917 that they were 'mostly jolly good chaps' but 'their own naive conceptions of how gentlemen behave among themselves lead them into an impossible politeness that is really very pathetic'.(2) These lower-class cadets were attempting to adopt the mannerisms of the Regular officer when off duty, not merely in front of their instructors. One cadet put the matter in a nutshell: 'We were all pretty keen and did our best and, provided that you were not lazy and kept alert, you could get by'.(3) Robert Graves, who served as an instructor and adopted many of the attitudes of a Regular officer went as far as to claim that the OCB system 'saved the army in France from becoming a mere rabble'.(4) Graves was essentially correct. Later in this thesis it will be argued that the products of OCBs had an important role in maintaining the morale of their men during the latter years of the war, displaying as strong a commitment to the Regular officers' paternalistic concept of leadership as had the public school temporary subalterns of 1914-16.

(1) For internalisation, see Handy, pp.138, 140-42.

(2) Hooper, Letters p.63.

(3) Unpublished account, p.34, N.A. Pease papers, 86/9/1, IWM.

(4) Graves, p.203. See also G.N. Wood, KRS Q.

This chapter has demonstrated the pains that were taken to mould the temporary officer of 1914-18 into a model of paternalism. (See also Appendix 3, Guides to Officership) The aim was to produce an officer who made use of personal and expert power to influence his men, who identified with his men and placed their well-being above his own. Such an officer is far removed from the popular image of the British officer of the Great War, as portrayed in popular television programmes such as Blackadder Goes Forth. Subsequent chapters will examine the practical application of paternalism.

Chapter 6

Officer-Man Relations: the Disciplinary and Social Context

The officer's role in enforcing and modifying discipline was a vital aspect of the officer-man relationship. Therefore, in this chapter officer-man relations will be placed into the context of the disciplinary regime of the wartime British army. The other ranks' experience of, and attitudes to, army life and the officer class will then be related to the working-class experience of civilian society. Finally, some evidence of the modification of the normal pattern of military discipline that occurred during the training of some newly-raised units in 1914-15 will be examined.

6.1 Hierarchy, Discipline and Punishment in the British Army, 1914-18

In general, the hierarchical structure of the wartime army strongly resembled that of the prewar Regular army. A temporary officer believed that 'Between officers and men there was a great gulf fixed'. (1) Pte. J.N. Hall, an American who enlisted in the Royal Fusiliers in 1914, had to come to terms with 'the class distinctions of British army life':

The officer class and the ranker class are east and west, and never the twain shall meet, except in their respective places upon the parade-ground.(2)

It is somewhat misleading to refer to the wartime army as being class based. Men were allotted places in a rigid hierarchy by virtue of their rank, not their social class. On receiving the King's commission, individuals were entitled to all the privileges of an officer: superior food and accommodation, deference from the ranks, even absolution from having their hair closely cropped,(3) regardless

(1) F. Moor, KRS Q.

(2) J.N. Hall, Kitchener's Mob (London, 1916) p.14. See also M.A. Mūgge, The War Diary of a Square Peg (London, 1920) pp.24, 35.

(3) N.D. Cliff, To Hell and Back with the Guards (Braunton, Devon, 1988) p.36.

of their social background. Likewise, possession of a public school education gave the private, for the most part, no privileges (but see below).

Inevitably the ranker's perspective on army life differed appreciably from that of the officer. Pte. H.S. Williamson (8/KRRC) wrote in 1918 that 'Probably no one, except those who have been in the Army can fully appreciate the huge difference between the rankers and the officers (sic) point of view'; earlier, he had written that 'Even in the trenches, everything is done to smooth things for officers'. As a middle-class artist, whose brother served as an officer, Williamson was well placed to appreciate the variety of experience. (1) However, the most basic difference between the experience of the officer and that of the soldier lay not in the disparity in leave, food or living conditions but in their treatment by the army itself.

With the brief exception of basic training, officers never experienced the way in which other ranks were treated by the army, unless they had themselves previously served in the ranks. Out of the trenches, rankers' lives were often characterised by boredom and monotony, and by the feeling of being mere pawns, unable to influence their fate, moved hither and thither at the whim of faceless military bureaucrats. Such feelings were, of course not unique to the British army of 1914-18. (2) Ordinary soldiers tended to see the army as an impersonal, arbitrary coercive system. Typical complaints concerned moving on of men who had just established themselves in comfortable billets, because of a sudden change of plan ('How like the Army!' commented a victim of one such move) and the army's habit of withdrawing blankets in May and issuing them in October, regardless of the actual temperature. (3) An NCO of 22/Manchesters

(1) Letters, 11 Feb. 1918, 24 Sept. 1916, H.S. Williamson papers, PP/MCR/333, IWM. The experience of battle was, however, common to regimental officers and other ranks.

(2) S. Stouffer et al, The American Soldier (Princeton, 1949) I, p.365, II, p.77.

(3) Smith, Four Years pp.120, 132.

attended a specialised course in range-finding. After rejoining his unit, he never used a range-finder again.(1)

The military authorities also had it within their power to impose petty humiliations and restrictions on non-commissioned ranks ranging from the withdrawal of any shred of personal privacy by ordering what the men called a 'prick-inspection', to restricting certain shops and estaminets for the use of officers only, via depriving NCOs of acting rank by the summary award of a commanding officer. (2) On one occasion, a sergeant was publicly humiliated by having his stripes ripped off in front of the rest of his unit.(3) Soldiers used various imagery to describe their situation. T.P. Marks, a schoolmaster who served in the ranks of 1/Gloucesters in the latter part of the war, wrote that the soldier was no longer an 'entity, but a cog waiting to be set in motion'.(4) Another private reported that it was a common saying among other ranks that from the moment the soldier disembarked at Havre he was 'a slave'.(5)

As Christopher Duffy has commented, 'It is notoriously difficult to evaluate the severity of the discipline of a military institution. If our attention is drawn by punishments of a spectacular and barbaric nature, we can easily overlook the small currency of blows and torments which have been meted out in every army known to history'.(6) In comparison with the discipline of the army before the abolition of flogging in 1881, the disciplinary code of the army of the Great War pales into insignificance. Likewise, the flogging of Indian

(1) Letter, 11 Aug. 1941, R.H. Tawney papers, BLPES.

(2) F. Manning, The Middle Parts of Fortune (London, 1977 edn.) pp.59, 142; GRO 1388, in SS 309, Extracts from General Routine Orders...1 Jan 1918 p.67.

(3) Letter, 27 Sept. 1917, L.B. Stanley papers, LULLC.

(4) T.P. Marks, The Laughter Goes from Life (London, 1977) p.33. See also C.E. Montague, Disenchantment (London, 1928 edn.) p.84.

(5) Graham, Challenge of the Dead p.121.

(6) C. Duffy, Russia's Military Way to the West (London, 1981) p.132.

soldiers during the 1914-18 war highlights the relative mildness of the treatment of their British counterparts.(1)

Nevertheless, British army discipline of the Great War was severe enough. One crude and not entirely satisfactory method of assessing the severity of discipline is to count the number of executions carried out. 346 British^{Empire} soldiers were executed, all but 37 for 'military' offences such as desertion, although this only represents 11.23 per cent off all death sentences passed. By comparison, only 37 men were executed in the British army between 1865 and 1898, and only one out of the four men executed during the Second Boer War suffered the penalty for desertion.(2) The German army of the Great War, which was considerably larger than its British counterpart, executed only 48 men, British sneers at 'Prussianism' notwithstanding.(3) Indeed, German officers noted the 'iron discipline, maintained by a severe code of punishments' which was in the 'very blood' of the British prisoners they examined. They also commented on resilience of British morale, and the respect rankers had for their officers.(4)

Interestingly, there is some evidence to suggest that British military authorities were dissatisfied with the effectiveness of the punishments available during the Boer War.(5) In 1904, a committee even called for the reintroduction of corporal punishment on active service, although this

(1) 8 Oct., 13 Nov. 1914, and Appx. 74, 27 Mar. 1915, WD, Indian Corps, A & Q, WO 95/1091, PRO. For a flogging in France, see letter, 6 Oct. 1914, and diary, 4 Oct. 1914, G.F. Patterson papers, RMASA; for floggings in Aden, see 11 and 12 Nov. 1915, WD of APM Aden, WO 154/315, PRO.

(2) A. Babington, For the Sake of Example (London, 1983) p.3, 189; E.M. Spiers, The Late Victorian Army (Manchester, 1992) p.73. All but 55 of the 346 were serving in British units.

(3) M. Messerschmidt, 'German Military Law in the Second World War', in W. Deist, (ed) The German Military in the Age of Total War (Leamington Spa, 1985) p.324.

(4) W. Nicolai, The German Secret Service (London, 1924) p.188; A.J. Fyfe, Understanding the First World War - Illusions and Realities (New York, 1988) p.179.

(5) Maj. W.F. Kelly, 'Report on Adjutant-General's Department...' (Pretoria, 1900), pp.1-2, WO 108/260, PRO.

recommendation was not acted upon.(1) Although a firm judgement must await a comparative study on military punishment in the two wars, the impression remains that the soldier of 1914-18 was subjected to a harsher military regime than his predecessor of 1899-1902.(2)

During the Great War Field Punishment No.1 was popularly known as 'crucifixion', from the practice of tying men to objects such as posts and wagon wheels for set periods. The milder Field Punishment No.2, noted a private of 13/E. Yorks., consisted of

full pack drill; not ordinary pack drill but with a police-sergeant standing by, shouting "Right turn, left turn, about turn"... one after the other, all done at something near the "double" .(3)

Despite improvements in conditions in the late nineteenth century, military prisons and field punishment centres were also characterised by brutal punishment regimes.(4) One man who served a sentence at Gosport military prison in 1916 recalled the monotonous and pointless cleaning tasks they were set and the blows dealt out casually by the warders. (5)

Men who were punished by death, penal servitude or Field Punishment No.1 constituted only a small minority of British other ranks. Yet these punishments had an impact on British soldiers out of all proportion to the number of men directly affected. Severe punishments acted as a salutary reminder of the power that the army had over their lives, and that the military authorities on

(1) '...Report of committee on punishments on Active Service', 5 Jan. 1904, p.11, WO 32/4512, PRO.

(2) For the discipline of the army in South Africa, see Maj. R.M. Poore, 'Report on Office of Provost Marshal' (Pretoria, 15 July 1900), WO 108/259, PRO; Nasson, pp.123-138; G.D. Sheffield, The Red Caps: The History of the Royal Military Police (forthcoming).

(3) Diary, 4 July 1916, A. Surfleet papers, IWM. See also unpublished account, p.26, E. Scullin papers, IWM.

(4) 'Report of committee on proposed alterations in Military Penal System', WO 32/8734; Spiers, Late Victorian Army, pp.74-75; R. Boyes, In Glass Houses (Colchester, 1988) pp.54-68.

(5) Unpublished account, p.33, P. Creek papers, 87/31/1, IWM.

occasions regarded the enforcement and maintenance of military discipline as more important than justice. At one level, this could take the form of the imposition of collective (or 'vicarious') punishments. One example occurred in 1915, when the men of 2/RWK were refused permission to drink from their water bottles on a march through the Mesopotamian desert until a thief gave himself up.(1) The use of vicarious punishments was denounced by Maj.Gen. Childs, the Director of Personnel Services, as 'hopelessly illogical', and in 1919 they were officially discouraged by the Army Council. Other senior commanders, including Haig, were in favour of them. (2)

One of the factors taken into account by senior commanders when deciding whether or not to confirm a death sentence was the state of discipline within the prisoner's unit and whether 'an example was necessary'.(3) It is now generally recognised that at least some men were executed without having had a trial which would have been regarded as fair by the standards of the Edwardian civilian judicial system, and some men were actually suffering from psychological wounds which would have merited treatment, not punishment, in the war of 1939-45. (4) All of this served to remind ordinary soldiers that they were very much at the mercy of their hierarchial superiors. An RFA driver, who received a relatively mild punishment from an officer who 'was the prosecutor, judge, jury and jailer' noted that this 'seemed to me to be a curious combination of power in one man' (although as noted in the next chapter, by awarding punishment at regimental level, a company commander could protect a man from the harsher punishments inflicted by courts martial). (5)

(1) A.G. Kingsmill, The Silver Badge (Ilfracombe, 1966) p.30.

(2) See the various minutes and correspondence in a War Office file of June 1919, 'Discipline - Vicarious punishment of troops', WO 32/9543, PRO.

(3) W. Childs, Episodes and Reflections (London, 1930) p.142.

(4) See Babington, For the Sake of Example passim; J. Putkowski and J. Sykes, Shot at Dawn (Barnsley, 1989) passim.

(5) Unpublished account, p.14, R.L. Venables papers, IWM.

Although one officer claimed that many soldiers preferred field punishment to a route march,(1) the reaction of most other ranks seems to have been horror and disgust. One ranker who witnessed 'crucifixion' wrote that it 'breaks a man's spirit'(2); another described it as 'disgusting and humiliating', especially with French civilians looking on; (3) yet another wrote that it made him 'sick with resentment. Of all the Army forms of punishment, and others are pretty rotten, I do not know of any more likely to embitter a man for ever'.(4)

A private of a Pals battalion saw an artilleryman being punished:

He was stretched out, cruciform-fashion, his arms and legs wide apart, secured to the wheel. His head lolled forward as he shook it to drive away the flies. I don't think I have ever seen anything which so disgusted me in my life and I know the feelings amongst our boys was (sic) very close to mutiny at such inhuman treatment...I'd like to see the devils who devised it having an hour or two lashed up like that.(5)

Rankers' attitudes towards the death penalty for cowardice and desertion were rather more ambiguous, for as the padre of 12/HLI pointed out, there was a certain logic in making men who had failed in their duty as soldiers pay the ultimate penalty, given the death of many of their comrades who had not failed.(6) Many were opposed. A prewar Regular, Cpl. A. Roberts, recorded in his diary that a sense of depression descended on 1/KRRC after a man had been executed. (7) Two other Regular rankers, Cpl. J. Lucy (2/R. I. Rif.) and Pte.

(1) Dunn, p.119. See also J. Nettleton, The Anger of the Guns (London, 1979) pp.166-7.

(2) Diary, 12 Jan. 1917, A Young papers, 76/101/1, IWM.

(3) Unpublished account, A.W. Fenn papers, 75/16/1, IWM.

(4) Unpublished account, p.74, G. Buckeridge papers, IWM.

(5) Diary, 4 July 1916, A. Surfleet, papers, pp.78-9. For an interesting discussion of 'crucifixion' by an old soldier, see R. Blatchford's articles in Sunday Chronicle 29 Oct., 5, 12, 19, 26 Nov. 1916.

(6) R.H.S. Steuart, March, Kind Comrade (London, 1931) pp.94-5. For a ranker's ambiguous reaction to a death sentence, see H.E. Harvey, Battle-Line Narratives (London, 1928) pp.129-158. This is a fictionalised account of the events leading to the execution of Pte. C.W.F. Skilton, discussed in chapter 2 above.

(7) Diary, 16 July 1915, A.H. Roberts papers, 81/23/1, IWM.

F.M. Packham (2/R. Sussex) believed that executions did not act as a deterrent but instead depressed morale.(1) The practice of reading out sentences of death from routine orders to troops on parade shocked many soldiers and prompted some educated, middle-class volunteers to criticise the death penalty's value as a deterrent for cowardice. Others resented it as casting an unnecessary slur on their motives for becoming soldiers, as another example of military mind failing to adjust to the fact that many units contained a very different type of man from the prewar Regular.(2)

Discipline can not, of course, be measured purely by punishments. Regular officers' views on the purpose of discipline were often sharply at variance with the opinions of many rankers on the same subject. A.A. Hanbury-Sparrow (R. Berks.), a Regular officer, argued that discipline was not 'meaningless, wooden obedience' but

the vehicle by which the superior will permeated the subconsciousness of the troops...close-order drill and rifle exercises were ceremonies by which the superior will made its presence felt.

The individual ego, which 'subconsciously was continually in revolt' against discipline, had to be suppressed. Thus the cleaning of brass buttons was important because it was 'a daily disciplinary exercise'. Discipline was intended to promote unit cohesion and military efficiency by producing obedient men who took a pride in developing soldierly skills, and who did not give way to fear in battle.(3)

By contrast, a middle-class Scots Guards private, Stephen Graham, accepted the importance of discipline in battle but argued that for many, the greatest

(1) Lucy, p.204; unpublished account, p.10, F.M. Packham papers, IWM.

(2) G. Coppard, With a Machine Gun to Cambrai (London, 1986 edn.) p.20; A. Rule, Students Under Arms (Aberdeen, 1934) p.52; letter, 15 Oct. 1963, R. Savage, BBC/IWM; R. Whipp, interview.

(3) A.A. Hanbury-Sparrow, The Land-Locked Lake (London, 1932) pp.217-18.

ordeal was not the battlefield but the training ground. (1) Anthony French, who served in the ranks of 15/Londons, believed that upon the 'calm self-confidence' produced by discipline rested 'one's chance of survival'. However, he resented the 'arbitrary restrictions on the individual [which went] beyond the requirements of safety and good discipline'. (2) Graham and French, among other soldiers, recognised that discipline was essential in battle, but did not agree with the army's methods of producing discipline, seeing it as designed to crush the temperament, destroy individuality, humiliate the soldier, and produce a sort of military robot.

The process of instilling discipline began in basic training. On reaching the depot, Graham was told that 'They try to break you at the begining and take all your pride out of you'. (3) Guards discipline might be thought to be exceptionally severe, but was probably not much worse than the discipline of many other training units in 1916-18. (4) At the beginning of the war discipline was less strict in many newly-raised units, and in some cases remained so for some time, but the honeymoon period experienced by some volunteers in 1914 was mostly short-lived. As one former ranker wrote,

With so much improvisation, a few months passed before those who had enlisted in newly created battalions discovered exactly what they had let themselves in for. They had engaged to serve... in a complex organisation incidently designed to enforce the will of each and every superior on those in the lowest rank of all... In order to carry out what they had conceived, for the most part romantically and generously as a patriotic duty, the young civilians were compelled to undergo a preliminary process... [involving] an almost total surrender of personal liberty and an immediate, unconditional obedience to orders. (5)

(1) S. Graham, A Private in the Guards (London, 1919) pp.1-2, 20.

(2) A. French, Gone For a Soldier (Kington, 1972) p.23. See also unpublished account, pp.33, 44, E. Partridge papers, LULLC.

(3) Graham, Private in the Guards p.27. See also Cliff, passim.

(4) Unpublished account, pp.22-23, W.H. Martin papers, PP/MCR/30, IWM; letter, 10 Oct. 1963, J.W. Binns, BBC/IWM.

(5) Brophy and Partridge, p.13.

Similar methods of training continued at base camps in France, of which the 'Bullring' at Etaples was the most notorious.

It has been argued that many wartime other ranks believed that there was a deliberate policy to 'crush the individual temperament as a means of securing compliance with military discipline' (1) and indeed F.P. Crozier, a 'fire-eating' officer, candidly admitted what many other ranks suspected: that training was intended to break down the natural humanity of the recruit and turn him into a ruthless killer.(2) While there was undoubtedly something in Crozier's views, the army's disciplinary regime is best seen as the result of preconceptions and traditions, and the inability, or unwillingness, of Regular officers and NCOs to adjust to the influx of a more educated type of man into the army, rather than the product of a deliberate policy.

Nonetheless, ordinary soldiers were quite prepared to believe in a conspiracy theory. One conscripted infantryman believed that the purpose of training was to make the life of the soldier so miserable that he ceased to worry whether he lived or died: 'A happy soldier does not want to die and this looked like the start of our conditioning'. (3) One important result of this was that when soldiers finally arrived at their units, they were likely to be relieved that discipline was less severe than in training units, and more inclined to look favourably upon the officers and NCOs who were responsible for the disciplinary regime.

However, frontline soldiers were not entirely freed from irksome aspects of discipline. High command and Regular officers in general laid great emphasis on the external aspects of discipline. A particular criterion for the state of

(1) Babington, Sake of Example p.131.

(2) F.P. Crozier, A Brasshat in No Mans Land (London, 1930) p.43.

(3) C. Haworth, March to Armistice 1918 (London,1968) p.25.

discipline in a unit was saluting. The very first routine order issued by the Inspector-General of Communications on arrival in France in August 1914 concerned the necessity for 'strict attention' to be paid to the saluting of allied officers. (1) A routine order later that year stressed that there was to be no relaxation in saluting in the field, 'except when active operations are actually in progress'. (2) Reminders about the importance of saluting were issued at various levels of command throughout the war, for as a III Corps routine order stated, a failure of men to salute officers indicated 'a want of discipline [which] reflects seriously on the unit...' (3) Other official criteria for discipline included smartness of appearance, cleanliness of billets and trenches, march discipline, smartness in drill. While many, if not most, officers and men accepted the necessity of such things, some thought that excessive insistence on them was unnecessary and even counterproductive. (4)

For most of the war, in a majority of units, middle-class men were subjected to the same training and disciplinary regime as the prewar soldier, and middle-class soldiers tended to resent 'bullshit' more than working-class ones. Initiative was effectively discouraged; any spark of independence was ground down. As a soldier remarked, a private 'could rarely walk twenty yards' without coming across someone with the power to '"tick him off"'. (5) As noted above, military service involves a loss of personal freedom, and in general, better-educated men feel status deprivation more strongly than ill-educated men. Just

(1) Extracts from ROs 13 Aug. to 5 Sept. 1914, WD of IGC, WO 95/3972, PRO.

(2) ARO, 22 Dec. 1914, WD of Adj.Gen., GHQ, WO 95/25, PRO.

(3) RO 29 Jan. 1916, WD of III Corps, A & Q, WO 95/684, PRO. See also S.S. 309, Extracts from General Routine Orders p.71.

(4) R. Feilding, War Letters to a Wife (London, 1929) pp.224-25; letter, 7 Oct. 1963, F. Blain, BBC/IWM.

(5) S. Southwold, 'Rumours at the Front', in C. O'Riordan et al, A Martial Medley (London, 1931) p.106.

as little advantage was taken of talents of temporary officers, the talents of educated other ranks were largely wasted. This is not of merely academic interest, for it is arguable that the best use was not made of the available material. No general attempt was made to develop Auftragstaktik (directive control) a command philosophy which involved the delegation of authority and the cultivation of initiative among the lower ranks.(1) Instead, as Frederic Manning, a novelist who served in the ranks of 7/KSLI, wrote,

Regular officers as a rule did not understand the new armies, they had the model of the old professional army always in their mind's eye... The majority...with brilliant exceptions, did not understand the kind of discipline that they wished to apply to these improvised armies was only a brake on their impetus. (2)

This failure to develop initiative was also related to the whole question of officer-man relations, and is further examined below.

6.2 The Social Context of Discipline and Authority

In view of the harsh nature of military discipline, from which officers were largely exempt, why did relationships between regimental officers and their men remain, for the most part, cordial? Some clues can be gleaned from an examination of the society from which the wartime army was recruited. British forces of the Great War did not represent 'a cross-section of British society'. Rather, a variety of social, medical, economic and political factors led to non-manual workers and professionals being over-represented in the army. From 1914 to 1916 the enlistment rate for manual workers was approximately 30 per

(1) For Auftragstaktik, see M. van Creveld, Fighting Power (London, 1983) pp.36-37; for criticisms, see C. Duffy, Red Storm on the Reich (New York, 1991) pp.54-55, 363-64.

(2) Manning, p.71.

cent, but 40 per cent for non-manual workers. Nonetheless, since 'numerically, the British army was preponderantly working-class in character' (1) it is necessary to place the attitudes of working-class soldiers to military discipline and authority into the context of their experience as civilians.

Contemporary observers sometimes suggested that working-class soldiers of the 1914-18 war had natural discipline: 'However much they girded with coarse and biting irony at discipline, they were really very well disciplined'. (2) A number of factors, including strict parental discipline, prepared the working-class male for the realities of military life. (3) The school and the work place were perhaps of even greater importance than the home in this respect.

Some wartime officers were horrified at the inadequacies of the elementary school system as revealed by their contact with products of that system.(4) Their comments echoed the emotive opinions of contemporary critics (5) and a modern historian: 'British elementary education served only to turn...sickly and filthy children into robots able to read and write and count and obey'.(6) Nevertheless, in some ways the system was a resounding success. In 1908 it was claimed that it produced 'the habits of obedience and regularity' (7) and some who experienced such schools came to appreciate the virtues of stern discipline.(8) Corporal punishment was ubiquitous. (9) According to a former

(1) P.E. Dewey, 'Military Recruiting and the British Labour Force During the First World War', HJ, 27, No.1 (1984) pp.199-223; Winter, Great War pp.25-64.

(2) C. Denison [pseud] 'From Two Angles' in A Martial Medley p.82. See also Aldington, p.243.

(3) R. Roberts, The Classic Slum (Harmondsworth, 1973 edn) pp.50-1; S. Meacham, A Life Apart (London, 1977) pp.161-2.

(4) eg [DS Cairnes] The Army and Religion (London, 1919) pp.101-3, 105.

(5) Quoted in J.H. Whitehouse, Education In My Time (London, 1935) p.170.

(6) C. Barnett, The Collapse of British Power (Gloucester, 1984 edn) p.104.

(7) W.H. Beveridge, Unemployment: A Problem of Industry (London, 1930 edn.) p.126.

(8) Unpublished account, H. Warner papers, P.462, IWM.

(9) P. Thompson, The Edwardians (London, 1977 edn.) p.73; Meacham, p. 171.

HM Inspector of Schools, writing in 1911, the school child, like the army recruit, had his spirit broken by 'severity and constraint'; this reduced the child 'to a state of mental and moral serfdom'; once this was achieved, 'the time has come for the system of education through mechanical obedience to be applied to him in all its rigours'. (1)

The use of military style drill in elementary schools was widespread. One of its primary purposes was to create discipline in school children. Many supervising instructors in schools were drawn from the army. In 1903 the Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration recommended that physical training should be made compulsory for school leavers of 14 years and older to prepare the male population for future military service 'with very little supplementary discipline'. (2) Although there were some modifications from 1904 onwards, physical education remained influenced by military recruit training down to 1914.

The inculcation of social discipline and orderliness was carried a step further by uniformed youth organisations such as the Boy's Brigade, Church Lads Brigade, and the Boy Scouts. As J.O. Springhall has argued, such bodies were developed for the purposes of social control; 'Fear and self-interest' were high among the motives of the middle-class originators of such uniformed organisations.(3) Some organisations were overtly militaristic, such as military cadet corps, or the Boy's Brigade, which drilled with dummy rifles. Others, notably the Boy Scouts, the largest youth organisation, placed less emphasis on

(1) E. Holmes, quoted in Barnett, Collapse of British Power p.104. See also J. Walvin, A Child's World (Harmondsworth, 1982) pp.54-56.

(2) P.C. McIntosh, Physical Education in England Since 1800 (London, 1952) pp.105, 111-13, 116, 136. See also J.S. Hurt, 'Drill, discipline, and the elementary school ethos' in P. McCann (ed.), Popular Education and Socialisation in the Nineteenth Century (London, 1977).

(3) J.O. Springhall, Youth, Empire and Society (London, 1977) p.16.

militarism: Baden-Powell, despite his military background, forbade the use of military drill in training. (1) Nonetheless, the overall effect was to produce a working-class which, like the middle-class, was trained for war, in Orwell's phrase 'not technically but morally'. Perhaps 41% of all young Edwardian males may have joined a uniformed organisation at some stage. (2) In sum, the generation of young men which filled the ranks of the British army of the First World War carried into the army first-hand experience of military-style drill, which had the express purpose of inculcating working-class youth with 'habits of sharp obedience, cleanliness and smartness'.(3)

Writing of his previous job in a department store, one Regular soldier stated that 'Discipline at Lewis's was the equal of any I've experienced since in the Army'.(4) Men drawn from regular employment made good soldiers, believed one staff officer, in part because they were 'accustomed to the discipline of the workshop', and were a distinct improvement on the quality of many prewar recruits, who were accustomed to unemployment.(5) Working-class ideas about work patterns had changed significantly by 1914. Before the industrial revolution work was 'task-oriented', (6) but the introduction of the factory system necessitated industrial discipline. This involved the internalisation by workers of a concept of 'time-thrift'. This entailed regular attendance at the place of work and remaining there for the length of the shift, and the acceptance of 'regularity, routine and monotony quite unlike pre-industrial rhythms of work'. (7) However, the behaviour of some recruits in 1914 suggests

(1) Ibid, p.54.

(2) Simkins, Kitchener's Army p.20.

(3) McIntosh, pp.141, 136, 149.

(4) Hawke, p.43.

(5) [F. Fox] 'GSO', GHQ (London, 1920) pp.172-73.

(6) E.P. Thompson, 'Time, Work Discipline and Industrial Capitalism', P and P No.38, (1967) p.60.

(7) E.J. Hobsbawm, Industry and Empire (London, 1968) p.66. See also S. Pollard, 'Factory Discipline in the Industrial Revolution' Economic History Review XVI, No.2 (1963), pp.254-71.

that the influence of factory discipline can be exaggerated (see below). Industrial workers would also have encountered supervisors who have been described as 'Non-Commissioned Officers' by historians,(1) and would have been prepared for one of the more pleasant dimensions of military life if they had worked for a paternal company such as the quaker-owned chocolate firms of Cadbury and Fry.(2)

A working-class soldier would have been well prepared for the nuances of military society by his previous experience as a civilian. Edwardian society was divided by economic and cultural factors into a number of mutually exclusive groups. Social mobility was possible in Edwardian Britain, but this tended to reinforce, rather than weaken, the divisions between classes, as people who had recently risen to the middle-classes took pains to distance themselves from the proletariat. (3) This did not necessarily lead to hostility between groups, but it did lead to ignorance. The majority of the urban upper and upper-middle classes only came across members of the working classes acting as servants of various descriptions, and such relationships were not generally conducive to intimacy. In rural areas landowners came into frequent contact with workers, but deference robbed these encounters of any real intimacy, the outward signs of which included touching the cap to a social superior. (4) The parallels with the military salute are clear.

Deference, or respect for, and obedience to, 'leaders' of society by those in the lower reaches of that society was one of the principal bonds of Edwardian

(1) J. Melling, 'Non-Commissioned Officers': British employers and their supervisory workers, 1880-1920', Social History, 5, No.2, (1980) pp 183-221.

(2) G. Wagner, The Chocolate Conscience (London, 1987) pp.48-72.

(3) T.W.H. Crosland, The Suburbans (London, 1905) p.105; R. Price, An Imperial War and the British Working Class (London, 1972) pp.7-10.

(4) H. Macmillan, Winds of Change, 1 (London, 1966) pp.99-100; Thompson, Edwardians p.147; unpublished account, p.36, A. Simpson papers, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds.

Britain.(1) Deference was usually given to those of aristocratic or gentlemanly background, and, of course, employers. In rural areas, deference had an 'economic basis in the dependence of farmers, servants and the labouring poor on the patronage or benevolence of individual landowners'. Similar considerations applied to the urban work force, who accounted for about three-quarters of the population. In 1911 there were one and half million domestic servants, who were by their very nature deferential. (2) Paternalistic concern was accompanied by considerable power over workers' lives. Many accounts exist of rural labourers being ordered to enlist by their employers in 1914.(3) However, an apparently deferential and paternalistic society such as prewar rural Norfolk disguised considerable tensions and conflicts, suggesting that attitudes were by no means uniform. (4)Deference was not, however, merely a pragmatic response to economic realities. It was also a way of life, which was in part brought about by the inculcation of deferential attitudes through education and religion.(5)

Deference was recognised as part of an interdependent, reciprocal relationship. The socially conservative working man of Edwardian Salford, for example, 'knew his place: he wanted that place recognised, however humble, and required others to keep theirs.' (6) This meant that social superiors should be prepared to keep their side of the unspoken bargain, by acting in a way that

(1) H. Newby, Country Life (London, 1987) p.58. For a discussion of the definition of the term, see H. Newby, 'The Deferential Dialectic', Comparative Studies in Society and History, 17, no.2, 1975.

(2) F.M.L. Thompson, English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century (London, 1971 edn,) p.184, 187; Newby, Country Life p.69; Meacham, p.202; D. Winter, Death's Men (Harmondsworth, 1979 edn.) p.230.

(3) C. Dakers, The Countryside at War 1914-1918 (London, 1987) pp.26-27; P. Horn, Rural Life in England in the First World War (London, 1984) pp.28-29.

(4) A. Howkins, Poor Labouring Men (London, 1985) pp.15-21.

(5) Walvin, Child's World pp.101-09.

(6) Roberts, Classic Slum p.168.

merited respect, and which allowed the 'respectable workingman', who was neither abjectly submissive nor revolutionary, to keep his self-esteem.(1)

A perception of partnership between the classes, 'however bogus in reality', was the fundamental reason why the working man played his part in the deferential relationship. A further obligation of the social superior was paternalism, (discussed in chapter 1 above), which was the 'natural exchange' for deference.(2) In return, the individual worker gave loyalty, good service, and obeyed the not inconsiderable demands of factory discipline, while collectively accepting the social and political status quo. There is also some evidence that similar conditions applied to clerical workers. When the employer resorted to coercion, or where patronage was offensive to working-class sensibilities, or paternalism failed to live up to expectations, deference broke down. The social elite accepted their role in the deferential relationship partly because it made economic and social sense to substitute such a relationship, based to some degree on mutual trust, or at least on mutual interest, for 'a less efficient, potentially unstable, coercive relationship'. (3)

However, genuine philanthropy and a sense of moral right and duty on the part of employers should not be ignored as a motive. Much British industry was organised around the small workshop, the average workshop in 1898-99 employing only 29.26 male employees. Under such conditions, it has been suggested, 'a political affinity' and even camaraderie could be fostered between employer and employee. The personal relationship between master and man was all important,(4)

(1) F.M.L. Thompson, The Rise of Respectable Society (London, 1988) p.198; R. McKenzie and A. Silver, Angels in Marble (London, 1968) pp.197-8. Interestingly, one of the pieces of evidence offered by the latter is an ex-soldier's reminiscences of paternal officers of the Great War.

(2) P. Joyce, Work, Society and Politics (London, 1980) p.91, 94.

(3) B. Waites, A Class Society at War (Leamington Spa, 1987) p.241. See also Joyce, pp.92-3; Roberts, Classic Slum pp.4-6.

(4) R. McKibbin, 'Why was there no Marxism in Great Britain?', EHR, 99, 1984 pp.302-303.

although workers also tended to be deeply suspicious of the representatives of the state. It was one thing to have a good working relationship with the 'boss', quite another to have one with the policeman, poor law guardian or gamekeeper. Working-class people sometimes felt themselves to be helpless in the face of an apparently arbitrary and coercive authority, a situation which closely parallels the experience of many soldiers during the Great War. (1)

Imperialistic attitudes, which included a diluted form of the public school ethos, were passed down in a variety of ways to the working classes. This subject has received much attention,(2) but it may be noted that the late Victorian and Edwardian period saw the growing acceptance among working-class families of the notion that a military career could be something less than shameful. The army, and military life, was depicted in a positive way on the stage and screen, war was shown in a beneficial light in school textbooks, while portraits of generals and admirals adorned classroom walls. It has been argued that a frequent feature of melodrama with an imperial theme was 'a cross-class brotherhood of heroism' in which white officers and white soldiers faced 'black barbarism' together. The message was the officer and the ranker were comrades, rather than class antagonists.(3)

It can be seen that working-class soldiers were in part prepared for military discipline by their experience in civilian life. Also, the officer-man relationship that existed in the British army both before and during the war reflected to an exaggerated degree the reciprocal deferential/paternal relationship of civilian society. Thus working-class soldiers expected officers

(1) F.M.L.Thompson, Respectable Society p.58-9; B. Waites, 'The Government of the Home Front and the "Moral Economy" of the Working Class', in Liddle, Home Fires pp.178-9.

(2) W.J. Reader, 'At Duty's Call' (Manchester, 1988); Spiers, Late Victorian Army pp.180-203.

(3) J.M. MacKenzie, Propaganda and Empire (Manchester, 1984) pp.43, 181-83.

to have privileges. Moreover, by striving to protect their men from the worse excesses of military discipline, and by sharing some of their hardships and discomforts, junior officers fulfilled their part of the deferential bargain. Officers may not always fully have understood the nature of the 'unspoken bargain'. A temporary officer of 2/E. Lancs. recorded that he regarded his daily inspection of his platoon's feet as 'an indignity for the men', but that his men did not see it in this light. His men's view is not surprising, since this attempt to prevent trench-foot was just one of the ways in which this officer demonstrated his paternalism.(1) It is no coincidence that some of the most eloquent attacks on military discipline and officers' privileges were made by middle-class rankers to whom working-class living conditions and thought processes were alien. Nor is it surprising that Field Punishment No.1 excited such disgust amongst rankers of all classes, since it offended against the concept of allowing the dependent class to retain their dignity.

The fact that the British lower classes were deferential and the higher classes were paternal meant that the two halves of the army had complementary attitudes. This helped to produce a loyal, hierarchical-minded and disciplined army with high morale. Some soldiers actually liked military discipline, since it gave a structure to their lives and removed the necessity to think for themselves.(2) The fears held by some prewar officers as to the reliability of the urban working classes in time of war proved to be unfounded.(3) Instead, Sir Neville Macready, the wartime Adjutant-General, was able to claim that 'the discipline and the good behaviour of the forces that Great Britain put into the field were...unequalled in the annals of war'.(4)

(1) Mellersh, p.72.

(2) Cliff, p.26; J.F. Tucker, Johnny Get Your Gun (London, 1978) p.12.

(3) 'Report of a Conference of General Staff Officers at the Staff College' (1910) pp.74-6, SCL; Travers, Killing Ground, pp.39-40.

(4) N. Macready, Annals of an Active Life I, (London, nd) p.217.

6.3 Liberal Codes of Discipline, 1914-15

One major exception to the rule that the British army operated a rigid code of discipline during the Great War should be noted. For a number of reasons, some units raised at the beginning of the war were characterised by discipline which was akin to that of prewar auxiliary units.

Considerable chaos prevailed when the British army underwent its massive and unplanned expansion in the autumn and winter of 1914. Maj.Gen. Hammersley, the commander of the newly-raised 11th Division, recalled that on arriving at Belton Park, near Grantham, which had been earmarked for a hutted camp, he 'found a man surveying the ground' but 'no buildings of any sort'. The brigadiers and regimental officers 'pegged out the camps' on 26 August. On the following day the first batch of one thousand men arrived, with a further 600 arriving each day thereafter. Training began on 28 August. Only one unit had uniforms. The rest had no clothes 'except what they stood up in', and, lacking a supply of water the men had to be marched to wash in a stream in Belton Park every afternoon. Only one battalion was in hutted accommodation by 23 September. (1) The conditions endured by 11th Division were not untypical.(2) In October 1914, NCOs of 2/6 LF ^{were} reluctant to give the order 'pick up those feet' for fear of the clattering of clogs on the parade square.(3) With the best will in the world, it was not possible to impose strict discipline on men under such abnormal and slightly ludicrous conditions.

In spite of the impact of industrial capitalism, discussed above, many recruits were profoundly ignorant of the basic demands of military discipline.

(1) F. Hammersley, Notes on 11th Division, CAB 45/237, PRO.

(2) See Simkins, Kitchener's Army pp.237-44.

(3) C.H. Potter and A.S.C Fothergill, The History of the 2/6 Lancashire Fusiliers (Rochdale, 1927) p.3.

There were many stories of men smoking on parade, falling out of the line of march to pick blackberries, or acting in a similarly unmilitarily way. (1) Initially, some recruits seem to have regarded the army as just another employer, without understanding the enormous difference between civilian and military methods. One officer commented:

As civilians it had been no serious matter to take a day or a few hours off from work...So now there were cases of men being absent for awhile (sic) from duty or parade...and they had not the remotest idea that this might be treated as a "crime".(2)

The RAMC private of 39th Division Field Ambulance who, tiring of army life, gave notice of his intention to resign, was acting perfectly correctly and honourably by his own code.(3)

Other civilian attitudes inimical to discipline took some time to subside, although, as will be demonstrated, many of them never vanished entirely. Maj. Cooper, an officer of 10th (Irish) Division recorded that many English recruits drafted to the division in 1914 were miners or other trade unionists who had 'acute suspicion of non-elected authority'. Moreover, married men initially resented a deduction from their pay, which was sent to their wives, on the grounds that they had not been informed on enlistment that 'this stoppage was compulsory, and so they considered that they had been taken advantage of'. That newly-enlisted trade unionists should think this way was less significant than the fact that an officer should go into print with a generally sympathetic account of their attitudes. Cooper argued that a major factor in coming to terms with the army was the growth of respect for the paternal care of their officers.(4)

In many cases, the newly-commissioned junior officers knew little more about

(1) V.W. Germain, The Kitchener Armies (London, 1930) p.111; L. Macdonald, Somme (London, 1983) pp.15-16.

(2) A.H. Atteridge, History of the 17th (Northern) Division (Glasgow, 1929) p.14.

(3) A. Jobson, Via Ypres (London, 1934) p.2.

(4) B. Cooper, The Tenth (Irish) Division In Gallipoli (London, 1918) pp.14-15.

the army than did the other ranks. One subaltern, on arriving at 1/6 DWR, found himself expected to command his platoon on his first day on parade. Fortunately, he had read up on drill on the train journey, and was thus able to keep one step ahead of his men.(1) Officers underwent much the same training as their men, and spent their valuable free time learning the additional duties of an officer.(2) Under these circumstances, officers were less inclined to insist on the niceties of military discipline, since they might not have personal experience of these niceties. In many units there very few Regular or ex-Regular officers or NCOs who might have offered guidance on such matters. Units of K1, the 'First Hundred Thousand', had first pick of the available Regular officers and NCOs. 10/DLI, for instance, had a Regular commanding officer, adjutant, and RSM. As the regimental historian commented, this alone counted for a great deal and gave them an advantage over units raised a little later.(3) Some dugout NCOs and officers, however, caused more trouble than they were worth. An ex-Regular NCO of 8/R. Sussex frankly admitted that he did not understand some of the modern drills and dealt with dissatisfied recruits by threatening to fight them.(4)

The enthusiasm of many of the volunteers of 1914, their genuine willingness to learn and endure poor conditions should not be underestimated. It encouraged some officers - experienced Regulars, as well as temporary officers fresh from civilian life - to be tolerant and tactful in their handling of their troops. Indeed, contemporaries often cited the enthusiastic spirit of the troops and the tact of their officers as being among the primary reasons for the success of the New Armies in turning a mass of raw, untrained recruits into fighting

(1) B.G. Buxton, KRS Q.

(2) J. Ewing, The History of the 9th (Scottish) Division 1914-1919 (London, 1921) p.9.

(3) W. Miles, The Durham Forces in the Field 1914-18, II (London, 1920) p.6.

(4) Letter, 15 Sept. 1914, C. Jones papers, IWM.

units, under very difficult conditions.(1) Attempts were made to balance the need to instil discipline with the necessity to recognise that the recruits of 1914 were often of a very different stamp to those of prewar days. As the historian of 16/Manchesters (1st Manchester Pals) wrote, military discipline did not come easily to the civilian volunteer. Its acceptance 'involve[d] a revolution in mental outlook, and the higher the intelligence and education of the men, the harder, perhaps, the lesson'. (2) In many cases, officers recognised the need to create a more enlightened, 'auxiliary' style of discipline than that of the Regular army, a style which relied less on 'imposed' than 'self' discipline.

6.4 A Case Study: Liberal Discipline in 8th Battalion East Surrey Regiment

A particularly vivid picture of the ways in which the officers of one freshly-raised New Army battalion modified discipline emerges from an unpublished account written by a former temporary officer, P.G. Heath, and a short book published in 1915, The New Army in the Making. By an Officer. The author was Capt. J.M. Mitchell (3) and the book described the process of training the men of 8/E. Surreys, disguised in the book as the '9th Blankshires'. Mitchell, a temporary officer, clearly brings out the officers' recognition that many of the recruits to the 8/E.Surreys were very different to the prewar class of recruit, and the discipline of the military unit needed to be moulded accordingly. They were not from the 'gutter and the pub'. Rather,

(1) See for example O. Rutter, (ed.) The History of the Seventh (Service) Battalion Royal Sussex Regiment (London, 1934) p.2.

(2) Anon, Sixteenth, Seventeenth, Eighteenth, Nineteenth Battalions The Manchester Regiment: A Record 1914-1918 (Manchester, 1923) p.6.

(3) Letter, 15 Sept. 1915, W.P. Nevill papers, WPN1/55, IWM.

they were men 'who counted for something in their civilian sphere'; Maj. A.P.B. Irwin, the battalion's Regular adjutant, described the men as 'most intelligent chaps'. (1) The battalion also included miners from South Wales who had 'a Celtic contempt for the red tape of discipline'. (2) In all, the recruit was 'no automaton', like the prewar Regular recruit; rather, he had 'a trade at his finger-ends' and had experience of 'the free initiative which is part of prosperity in civilian life'. (3) However exaggerated and idealised this view might have been, it seems clear that the men of 8/E.Surreys were very different in character to those of prewar Regular units.

Inevitably, the process by which Regular and dugout NCOs and officers of the battalion came to terms with the changed circumstances was not entirely smooth. Some dugouts who had been retired since before the Boer War had to adjust to what Mitchell called 'the new discipline' which had evolved in the first decade of the century. Nineteenth century discipline, Mitchell asserted, was based purely 'on the principle of authority' while new discipline 'incorporates with an equal rigidity of discipline the principle of individual responsibility and initiative'. (4) Although Mitchell did not say so, this new approach to discipline had emerged from the debates that followed the Boer War (see chapter 2 above). According to Heath, it even took Irwin, who played an important role in the development of the peculiar style of the 8/E. Surreys, some time 'before he realised that he was dealing with enthusiastic civilians and not regular soldiers'. (5)

(1) [J.M. Mitchell] The New Army in the Making By an Officer. (London, 1915) p.14; A.P.B. Irwin, Oral History Interview, 000211/04, IWM.

(2) Mitchell, p.17. For the composition of the battalion, see Nichols, 18th Division p.2.

(3) Mitchell, p.21.

(4) Ibid pp.21-22.

(5) Unpublished account, p.25, P.G. Heath papers, DS/Misc/60, IWM.

Heath and Mitchell both paid tribute to the way in which dugouts responded to the need to adapt to the new type of soldier. (1) In the attempt to turn, almost overnight, civilians without arms or uniforms into soldiers, 'hard cases' were 'unavoidable'. A 'few men [were] punished unjustly' and some 'untactfully', but the punishments were minor, and it was regarded as 'imperative whenever possible' to 'temper the wind to the shorn lamb'. (2). Above all, Mitchell's book reveals the understanding and sympathy that the battalion's officers, temporary and Regular, had for the indiscipline of raw but enthusiastic troops.

Subalterns also began to forge links with their men based on admiration and paternal pride. The fact that newly-commissioned subalterns and men were learning their trade together aided this process. Heath somewhat rashly told his men that he knew little more about military life than they did, and asked them to bear with him in the mistakes that he was bound to make. He wrote that subalterns 'treated their men as friends and human beings...in return the men seemed to like and respect their officers, and certainly gave them willing obedience'. All too aware of the harsh disciplinary code of the army, in which 'The slightest trivial offence constituted a "crime"', the officers sought 'to keep them [the men] out of trouble provided they were pulling their weight in all things that mattered'. A Pte. Bird, for instance, was five minutes late appearing on parade. Heath did not punish him, but ordered Bird's platoon sergeant to tell Bird's friends to ensure that he was more organised in future. Bird was a keen soldier, and by refusing to follow the official path of 'criming' him, Heath avoided alienating Bird.(3) This is just one example of a

(1) Mitchell, p.22; unpublished account, p.22, P.G. Heath papers, DS/Misc/60, IWM.

(2) Mitchell, pp.24, 26.

(3) Unpublished account, p.51-54, 229, P.G. Heath papers, DS/Misc/60, IWM.

subaltern seeking to protect his men by bending the strict rules of the army, and it is also indicative of the way in which good relations were built up between officers and men long before units went on active service.

6.5 Other Examples of Liberal Discipline in Newly-Raised Units, 1914-15

The officers of the 8/E. Surreys were not the only ones to adopt an enlightened style of discipline for a newly-raised unit. Another 18th Division unit to do this was the 8/Norfolks, where in the early days discipline was aided by the virtual absence of crime and the fact that the few malefactors were unofficially, but severely, punished by their peers, before officers could take action. An officer paid tribute to the battalion commander, Lt.Col. F.C. Briggs, 'whose tact had very largely contributed to the harmony and efficiency' of the battalion. The efforts made during training seems to have borne fruit on active service, since in May 1916 Lt.Col. F. Maxwell, who was temporarily attached to the 8/Norfolks, noted in his diary that it was a battalion which was 'happy all through, with excellent officers and NCOs - a real good unit'.(1)

Rankers as well as officers mentioned the use of 'auxiliary' style discipline in many newly-raised units in 1914-15. A middle-class socialist, Sgt. F.H. Keeling (6/DCLI), wrote that discipline in Kitchener units was different from that of Regular battalions 'because the conditions are different', but discipline also differed from battalion to battalion in the New Army, the variations being largely caused by the personal idiosyncrasies of officers commanding companies and battalions, and the distribution of Regular NCOs. (2) In 5/Wilts. a soldier who went absent without leave by forging the signature

(1) T.s. history of 8/Norfolks, pp.4, 15, C.F. Ashdown papers, IWM; [C.A. Maxwell] I Am Ready (London, 1955) p.128.

(2) E. Townshend (ed.) Keeling Letters and Recollections (London, 1918) p.219.

of an officer on a pass (which would normally have been a serious offence) merely received ten days confined to barracks and ten days stoppage of pay, apparently because it was realised that he had been treated unfairly in being denied leave in the first place.(1) C.F. Jones, a middle-class ranker of a second-line Territorial unit (2/15 Londons) left an account of a warrant officer modifying discipline in training in England. When Jones was elected spokesman for a group of men to complain about an NCO's 'tyranny', the CSM tore up the charge sheet against Jones (who had incurred the wrath of the military authorities) and appealed to 'a man of your age and experience' not to encourage 'these b--- boys'. (2)

The 22/RF, a Pals battalion raised by the Royal Borough of Kensington from Londoners and colonials, was moulded in the image of a retired prewar Regular officer, Maj. (later Brig.Gen.) R. Barnett-Barker.(3) Rather like Philip Howell, Barnett-Barker had radical views on discipline, and, in the word of a brother officer and friend, 'nursed and trained it [the battalion] on his own lines, with very definite ideas as to the means of extracting the best from the material', adapting 'his methods with real liberality of thought to the new conditions of warfare and the new types of soldiers'.(4) There is much evidence from rankers of the battalion to substantiate this claim. Barnett-Barker was the second-in-command of the unit from September 1914 until September 1915, when he took command, and he remained in command for two years. The need to conciliate two companies of unruly colonials seems to have played an important part in persuading the more conservative original commander of the 22/RF to

(1) Unpublished account, S.W. Blythman papers, 80/40/1, IWM.

(2) Unpublished account, pp.29-30, C.F. Jones papers, LHCMA.

(3) Sheffield, 'Effect of War Service' passim.

(4) Ibid, pp.32-34, 41-44.

adopt a liberal disciplinary system. (1)

Undoubtedly, the tolerance of gross indiscipline in the very early days did not last very long, and as training progressed, discipline improved. A ranker of 11/Suffolks (The Cambridge Battalion) recalled that discipline was tightened up when they began weapons training. (2) On the whole, the volunteer soldiers of 1914-15 came to recognise the need for discipline, an acceptance which was, in many cases, accompanied by the development of esprit de corps. For our purposes, it is important to note that the growth of trust of, and admiration for, officers played a part in this process. Sir Ivor Maxse, GOC 18th Division and a shrewd judge, commented in some confidential notes written in November 1915 on the 'excellent physical and moral' qualities of the subalterns of the division, who spent eight hours a day with their men and identified with their charges' 'interests both on and off parade'. (3) A Regular dugout, Brig.Gen. J.H. Poett, the commander of 55th Brigade, attributed the excellence of the brigade's discipline to the 'good type' of recruit and to the battalion commanders 'who were sympathetic and human...while insisting on strict discipline [they] handled their men with discretion and tact'. Mutual confidence between officers and men', he stated, 'is the very essence of sound discipline and a happy battalion'. Under the conditions endured by recruits in the autumn of 1914, this growth of confidence between the ranks 'needed to be nurtured in every possible way'. The 8/E. Surreys was one of the battalions under Poett's command.(4)

Two more examples, both drawn from 18th Division, illustrate the development of esprit de corps in 'happy' units. R.A. Chell, an officer of 10/Essex,

(1) Letter, 18 Oct. 1914, W.J.T.P. Pythian-Adams papers.

(2) E. Renshaw, quoted in A.J. Peacock, 'A Rendezvous with Death', Gunfire No.5, (1986) p.256.

(3) 'Notes on the New Armies by a Divisional Commander', p.1, File 10, Sir I. Maxse papers, 69/53/5, IWM.

(4) [J.H. Poett], 'A Dugout in War and Before', The Great War 1914-1918 1, No.4, (1989) p.144.

wrote of long training marches in England:

one saw platoon pride and comradeship happily demonstrated: Platoon pride said "no one must be allowed to fall out" and comradeship said "two of us carry Bill's rifle and Jack's pack and they'll make it...We certainly were a happy team and a gentle, if really firm, discipline was the foundation of this. (1)

The fact that this battalion's all-rank Old Comrades Association continued in existence until the early 1960s is evidence that the other ranks shared these feelings. An example drawn from 7/Buffs which indicates that the growth of comradeship between officers and men in 18th Division was not entirely wishful thinking on the part of the officers comes from the diary of Pte. R. Cude, who was extremely critical of army life, particularly of the chaos that prevailed during the first weeks of the battalion. However, by the time he arrived in France Cude had developed a strong admiration and affection for some (but by no means all) of his officers, and a strong sense of esprit de corps: 'I am a Buff above all things'.(2)

In conclusion, the disciplinary regime of the British army was, in general, harsh, and as such it reflected the nature of British society. However, the twin concepts of deference and paternalism helped to reconcile working-class soldiers to military discipline. Moreover, at least some units raised in 1914-15 operated a liberal, 'auxiliary' disciplinary system during their training period in Britain. The extent to which liberal discipline survived on active service, and the reasons why in some cases it was replaced by the 'Regular' variety, are considered in the final chapter.

(1) R.A. Chell, 'My first command - service with an Essex battalion', Essex Countryside (Dec. 1972) p.41.

(2) Diary, p.2, 8 Sept. 1914, p.12, 8-16 Sept. 1915, p.31, May 1916, R. Cude papers, IWM.

Chapter 7

Officer-Man Relations: The Officer's Perspective

At the beginning of the war the Regular British other rank was generally portrayed in the press as a brave, dogged, tough, phlegmatic, soldierly working man in uniform who enjoyed an excellent relationship with his paternal officer. In the space of two days in September 1914 The Times printed an anecdote about a soldier who was more concerned about the loss of his pipe than his wound, and quoted a sergeant's opinion that one of his officers had 'died one of the grandest deaths a British officer could wish for'.⁽¹⁾ A subheading in The Times of 12 September 1914 read 'Mutual Compliments of Officers and Men'. The following article quoted an artillery officer as saying that 'Our men and horses are wonderful' and cited a sapper's opinion that 'the officers are grand. They do everything they can for our comfort...I cannot speak highly enough of them'.⁽²⁾ Conversely, the soldier-officer relationship in the German army was portrayed as being based on fear; 'machine-like' German soldiers were bullied in camp and driven into battle at gunpoint. Sometimes the contrast between the two armies was made explicit, on other occasions it was left unspoken.⁽³⁾ Similar views on British and German officer-man relations can be found in British magazines and books of the time.⁽⁴⁾ Broadly similar images of officer-man relationships appeared in print throughout the war years, even though the social composition of the army underwent significant change in this period. ⁽⁵⁾

The purpose of this and subsequent chapters is to discover whether officer-man relations in the British army of 1914-18 bore any resemblance to the version

(1) The Times 7, 8 Sept. 1914.

(2) The Times 12 Sept. 1914. See also Daily Sketch 8 Sept. 1914.

(3) The Times 9, 10, 22 Sept. 1914; Daily Mirror 1 Aug. 1914.

(4) The War Illustrated 29 Aug. 1914 p.54; ibid 3 Oct. 1914 p.158.

(5) See A.N. Lyons, Kitchener Chaps (London, 1915) pp.84-85; Mr Punch's History of the Great War (London, 1919) pp.54, 178; The War Illustrated, 11 Nov. 1916 p.306.

that appeared in the press. In this chapter some general aspects of inter-rank relations will be examined, mainly from the perspective of the officer.

7.1 The Bureaucracy of Paternalism

The relationship between the officer and his men began when they met for the first time. Anyone can be appointed to a position of command, but an individual can only become a true leader when his subordinates ratify that appointment in their hearts and minds.(1) Bernard Montgomery, commissioned into the R. Warwicks. in 1908, believed that

The first thing a young officer must do when he joins the Army is to fight a battle, and that battle is for the minds of his men. If he wins that battle and subsequent similar ones, his men will follow him anywhere; if he loses it, he will never do any real good.(2)

Many of Montgomery's contemporaries agreed with these sentiments.(3) As has been demonstrated, a subaltern of the Great War, unless perhaps he had joined a newly-raised unit in 1914, would have been exposed to a great deal of teaching on the importance of good-officer man relations during his training, and he would have been well aware of the importance of this first meeting. Alan Thomas, commissioned into RWK in 1915, was assailed by doubts before arriving at his battalion, fearing that he would not be 'up to it', and would be unable to win the respect of his men.(4)

Officers came to know whether or not they had been accepted by their men in a variety of ways. One officer of the 2/Wilts. discovered that his men approved of him through censoring their letters on active service.(5) A Jewish officer of

(1) J. Adair, Developing Leaders (Maidenhead, 1988) p.13.

(2) Montgomery, Memoirs pp.486-7.

(3) W. Slim, Unofficial History (London, 1970 edn.) p.94.

(4) A. Thomas, A Life Apart (London, 1968) p.33.

(5) Letter, 24 Dec. 1914, W.B.P. Spencer papers, 87/56/1, IWM.

4/N. Staffs. was made aware of his batman's approval when the latter took pains to cook bully beef instead of bacon, while G.H. Cole, a subaltern of 1/20 Londons, 'realised my acceptance' when he heard a spectator call him by a (fairly respectful) nick-name while Cole was playing football. (1) Sometimes, of course, officers earned disparaging nicknames from their men, such as 'Ragtime', a contemporary adjective for absurdity or inefficiency. (2)

Officers who joined units while in training had a distinct advantage over those who joined a battalion on active service, particularly on the Western Front. A ranker officer who joined 2/Cameron's in 1916 lamented that it took time^{to} get to know undemonstrative 'Jocks' but 'Almost before you have time to get to know their names some change is made, or you lose half of them in action'. (3) By comparison, Alan Thomas, who joined a reserve battalion in England, was able to spend weeks 'learning the strength and weakness' of each man in his platoon. (4) It is not inconceivable that some officers's first contact with their men came just before they went into battle.

Officers who knew and understood their men made the most effective leaders. Slim's biographer wrote that the future field marshal, commissioned in 1914, 'had the inestimable merit of never having forgotten the smell of a soldier's feet'. (5) One man, drawing on his experience as a junior officer in the Great War, wrote that subalterns should 'know personally' every man under his command: 'what he is good for, what he was in civil life, if he is married, etc - and let the man know that you take an interest in him'. (6) It is clear that

(1) H.D. Myers, G.H. Cole, KRS Q. For a perceptive fictionalised account of a similar rite of passage in a later period, see G.M. Fraser, The General Danced at Dawn (London, 1972 edn.) pp.18-35.

(2) Unpublished account, S.B. Abbott papers, 78/36/1, IWM.

(3) Anon, A Soldier's Diary of the Great War (London, 1929) p.170.

(4) Thomas, p.37.

(5) R. Lewin, Slim: The Standardbearer (London, 1978 edn) p.9.

(6) 'Wisdom for Warts' p.3, D. Hamond papers.

many subalterns conscientiously followed such advice. Lt. C. Meadowcroft (33/Londons), for instance, kept a record of the addresses of the next of kin of the soldiers in his platoon. Interestingly, in civil life he was a bank clerk, and thus unlikely to have absorbed the paternal ethos at a public school.(1) Another temporary officer, E.G. Venning of the R. Sussex, claimed to 'know the ways and peculiarities of every man of mine'. This seemed to be an effective tactic of leadership. Two of his men refused promotion, because this would have meant leaving Venning and moving to another company.(2)

The British army of 1914-18, dominated by prewar Regular officers, took no chances with the welfare of its lower ranks. Paternalistic leadership and management were institutionalised. Junior officers were given little opportunity to neglect their men. An officer who served in the 2/6 DWR in 1918 was 'always amused' to have to sign a certificate stating that his men's feet had been rubbed, their socks had been changed and they had eaten a hot meal, but he recognised that there was a serious purpose behind it all.(3) Even on the beaches of Gallipoli, 'endless returns', wrote a subaltern in October 1915, 'have to be made about one's men - health, clothes, equipment, arms, ammunition, etc...'(4) Official divisional trench orders issued in 1917 commanded that, among other things, at night the duty officer and NCO should frequently patrol the trench line, and that arrangements should be made to provide a hot drink for the men between midnight and 04.00.(5) Other official documents ordered the officers to inspect men's respirators and apply 'Glasso' to the eye-pieces to prevent fogging,(6) to ensure the water they drank was pure,(7) and to drain

(1) Document in C. Meadowcroft papers, LULLC.

(2) Letter, May 1915, E.G. Venning, in L. Housman (ed.) War Letters of Fallen Englishmen (London, 1930) pp.282.

(3) Unpublished account, Notebook III, B.D. Parkin papers, 86/57/1, IWM.

(4) P.M. Campbell, Letters from Gallipoli (Edinburgh, 1916) p.26.

(5) Divisional Trench Orders 1917 (AP&SS 1667 1500 1/17) pp.3, 11.

(6) Supplement to SS 419 - Protection against Tear Gas Shells'.

(7) 'Entrainment and Move Orders 33 Division 26 Aug. 1916', 71-210, RMASA.

trenches to prevent trench-foot.(1) At divisional level, staff conferences discussed 'the comfort and health of the men'.(2) In February 1918 66th Division issued a memorandum in which the divisional commander drew attention to the wide discrepancies in sick rates of various battalions under his command, which were, he said, partly due 'to the men's moral (sic) and state of happiness, which are largely dependent on the thoughtfulness and care of their officers'.(3)

The much-derided obsession of the staff with apparent trivialities had its roots in concern that temporary officers, mere civilians in uniform, might neglect their paternalistic duties towards their men. Wyn Griffith, a temporary officer of 15/RWF, described what might be called the 'bureaucracy of paternalism' in these terms:

every man above the rank of private is his brother's keeper... This concern, this anxiety, and interest, minute and unceasing, ...[is] characteristic of the British Army...It can be harassing, and often is, but it is omnipresent throughout the hierarchy of the command and the staff. (4)

7.2 Officers and Practical Paternalism

Most temporary officers of the Great War confounded official fears by displaying an extremely high level of paternalism. Officers' paternalism was most practically expressed in welfare work. In contrast to the 1939-45 war, no centrally organised welfare service existed in 1914-18, although organisations such as the YMCA and the Salvation Army did sterling work. Much responsibility was placed on the regimental officer and padre.(5) The primary responsibility

(1) Routine Orders, 23 Nov. 1914, WO 95/25, PRO.

(2) W.N. Nicholson, Behind the Lines (London, 1939) pp.33-4, 45. See also conference reports and memoranda in Sir. I. Maxse papers, 69/53/5, IWM.

(3) Memorandum from AA&QMG, 66th Division, 28 Feb. 1918, P. Ingleson papers, LULLC.

(4) W. Griffith, Up to Mametz (London, 1981 edn.) pp.180-81.

(5) M.C. Morgan, The Second World War 1939-45, Army, Army Welfare (War Office, 1953) pp.1-2.

of the officer was to see that men were well fed and clothed, and given at least a minimum of comfort. There were many instances of officers taking this duty very seriously indeed. On one occasion during training in England, the men of 1/15 Londons were given inadequate rations and a sergeant complained. Later, an officer's servant arrived with a packet of sandwiches for the NCO, much to the latter's embarrassment. More importantly, there was a general increase in rations.(1) Sometimes officers would forego their own comforts to ensure that their men were well cared for. On one occasion, the all-important rum ration failed to arrive at a TF unit. The battalion commander promptly handed over six bottles of whisky, which were 'as precious as molten gold', so that the men should not go without their warming tot.(2) To a large extent, this was simply a continuation of the prewar convention that officers should place their men's comfort above their own.

In the years 1914-16, it was extremely common for officers to use their own money to purchase gifts for their men. Many officers' letters to their families included requests for cigarettes, clothing and chocolate for their men. Wealthy officers engaged in philanthropy on a spectacular scale. In December 1915 an officer of 2/Coldm. Gds. sent home for 200 large mince pies for distribution to his men.(3) Other, less affluent officers kept their gifts to more modest proportions. Two gunner subalterns may stand as representative. The first wrote home in December 1914 for four pairs of gum-boots for his NCOs 'who would appreciate them highly'. (4) The second, concerned that the army

(1) Unpublished account, p.40, C.F.Jones papers, LHCMA.

(2) C.E. Carrington, 'Some Soldiers', in Panichas, p.161. For a similar incident in a Regular unit (2/Leinsters) see F.C. Hitchcock, "Stand To" A Diary of the Trenches 1915-18 (Norwich, 1988 edn.) p.211; for a New Army unit (10/Essex), see R.A. Chell, KRS Q.

(3) Letter, 24 Dec. 1915, Sir W. Baynes papers, LULLC.

(4) Douglas of Kirtleside, Years of Combat (London, 1963) p.51.

was not issuing enough socks, set his seven sisters to work on knitting these essential items for his men. Each sock arrived at the front with five Woodbines tucked inside.(1) The example of an officer of 9/Devons, who continued to send parcels to his men at the Front while he was recovering from wounds in England, and that of an officer who returned to his former unit to distribute cigarettes to men who were no longer under his command, indicates that such acts of generosity were sometimes, perhaps usually, carried out in a spirit of affection as well as pure pragmatism. (2) Not surprisingly, officers who took pains to attend to the needs of individual men, such as Maj. Heelas of 19th Divisional Artillery who obtained a pair of brown officers' boots for a soldier whose own footwear had worn out, were regarded with affection by their men.(3) (The officer-man relationship is considered from the ranker's perspective in chapter 8).

Officers' regard for their men's welfare was not confined to attending to their creature comforts. A revealing passage occurs in the memoirs of Bernard Martin, a temporary subaltern of 1/N. Staffs. Martin wrote of his regret at not being able to keep a pipe he had taken from an enemy corpse: 'my men...[would] have laughed at its swanky German appearance, tried smoking it turn and turn about...' This sentence, casually inserted into a passage concerned with other matters, demonstrates one of the unspoken assumptions that governed the conduct of many Great War subalterns, including the eighteen-year-old Martin: that keeping his men amused was an important part of the officer's duties.(4)

(1) Unpublished account, p.30, H.D. Paviere papers, 81/19/1, IWM. See also letter, 5 Aug. 1915, G.E. Miall Smith papers, LULLC.

(2) Letters from soldiers to Pocock, 1915, in J. Pocock papers, LULLC; Anon, Artillery and Trench Mortar Memories, 32nd Division (London, 1932) p.662.

(3) Letter, 10 July 1963, H. Boater, BBC/GW, IWM.

(4) B. Martin, Poor Bloody Infantry (London, 1987) p.115.

The soul and mental well-being of the soldier were also the responsibility of the conscientious officer. When, in April 1916, no padre was available to take a church service, an officer of 8/E. Surreys took one himself: 'Just the Confession, Gospel, Lord's Prayer, Creed, a tiny address on Easter & Lent & a couple of hymns'. (1) It is clear that many officers were extremely diligent in dealing with their men's personal problems. A ranker of 1/Coldm. Gds. recorded in June 1916 that a fellow Guardsman had broken down at the graveside of his brother: 'the officer has been very good to him and has got him sent to a convalescent camp for a time'. (2) Conversely, in February 1916 2/Lt. H.A. Bowker (9/W. Yorks.) discovered from censoring his men's letters that one of them had family problems and intended to speak to Bowker about them. Bowker went into 'a most horrible funk' and avoided the soldier until cornered. Bowker's youth and inexperience seem to have been at fault here, since he displayed otherwise impeccably paternal attitudes, buying food for his men to make up for the inadequacies of the food on a troopship. (3)

An important part of the unwritten contract between officers and their men was the defence of helpless men from higher authorities and the military machine. If many men felt themselves to be at the mercy of an impersonal and arbitrary coercive system, many officers tried their best to defend them from what were perceived as the unfair demands of military authorities. In extreme cases, this could involve a commanding officer jeopardising his career to defend his men. On the Somme, in September 1916, for instance, the commander of a Regular unit, 1/DCLI, reported his battalion as 'unfit to go into action': 200 men had gone sick, largely as the result of the poor conditions of their

(1) Letter, 9 Apr. 1916, WPN/177, W.P. Nevill Papers, IWM. See also V.F. Eberle, My Sapper Venture (London, 1973) p.60.

(2) Diary, 3 June 1915, H. Venables papers, LULLC.

(3) Letter, 4 Feb. (actually Jan.) 1916 3 Oct. 1915, H.A. Bowker papers, LULLC.

trenches and a logistic breakdown. To take such a stand was, as a fellow battalion commander of 5th Division commented, an act of 'great moral courage'.(1) A similar event had occurred in May of that year when the commanders of the 1/R. Berks and 22/RF had cancelled an attack on Vimy Ridge. Their corps commander, Sir Henry Wilson, contemplated trying them by court martial, although in retrospect their decision was clearly correct on military grounds.(2)

Protecting their men did not, of course, always entail commanding officers taking such outspoken and personally risky stands. Probably far more typical was the attempt of the commander of a home service unit, 6/Middlesex, to save a thrice wounded private from returning to the front. (3) A rather similar incident occurred during the fighting in the spring of 1918 when the commander of a battalion in 51st (Highland) Division gave a man with a superficial wound permission to retire to a dressing station. A subaltern was surprised at this leniency, until he noticed that the soldier wore no less than six wound stripes on his sleeve.(4)

7.3 Garth Smithies Taylor - A Case Study in Paternalistic Love

The incidents cited above may be interpreted as nothing more than extensions of the prewar code of paternalism. However, the language used by many junior officers during the war indicates that their relationship with their men was based on something more than just a professional concern for their wellbeing. Indeed, the care and affection of the temporary officer for his men is a

(1) Letter, 17 Nov. 1935, E.W. Flanagan, CAB 45/133, PRO.

(2) Sheffield, 'Effect of War Service' pp.70, 78-79.

(3) Notebook II, p.50, 9 June 1916, G.G.A. Egerton papers, 73/51/1, IWM.

(4) Extract from privately published memoir, p.76, Lord MacDermott papers, LHCMA.

constant theme running through British memoirs, letters and diaries. An officer of 1/RWF spoke for many of his contemporaries when he wrote that 'the only way to run a company is by love'. (1) One junior officer, the novelist Gilbert Frankau, described the relationship in terms of a 'marriage' between the officer and his platoon.(2) A sapper subaltern used a slightly different metaphor, that of parenthood, to make much the same point.(3) Both neatly capture the idea of a tender, caring relationship. It is possible that for some officers this relationship may have been tinged with homoeroticism, if not homosexuality, but for the vast majority of officers the relationship was entirely innocent. (4)

An officer did not have to serve in a frontline unit to experience love for his men. In February 1916, Garth Smithies Taylor, an ASC subaltern, put his feelings about his men into verse:

To me the men and horses are my friends
With whom I daily mingle and converse
To learn their needs and help them when their life
Seems burdened with a sense of uselessness
Or weary with their daily toil as slaves
They do not know it, but I love them all
And mean, by being fair to gain their love
And confidence by showing that I trust
Each one to work and play as man, with head
And heart as high as I pray mine might be.(5)

Shortly afterwards Taylor transferred to an infantry battalion, 2/SF, where he began a love affair with his new charges. In April 1916 he wrote to his family 'My platoon is mine now, and not lent to me as it has been for the last 6 weeks. The men are ripping, and what more could one want'? In another letter

(1) B. Adams, Nothing of Importance (Stevenage, 1988 edn.) p.211.

(2) P. Beaver, (ed.) The Wipers Times (London, 1973) p.79.

(3) G. Macleod Ross, KRS Q.

(4) See P. Fussell, The Great War and Modern Memory (London, 1975) pp.270-309, and C.E. Carrington's hostile review in Newsletter of the Friends of Amherst College Library, (Winter, 1976).

(5) Poem in G.S. Taylor papers, LHCMA.

written a month later, Taylor referred to his men as 'absolutely splendid' and 'always ready to do anything that is wanted of them' despite their constant grumbling.(1) Taylor's attitudes are worth examining at some length, for they raise a number of interesting points.

Firstly, although his attitudes might seem to be steeped in public school concepts of duty and paternalism, Taylor actually attended a grammar school. Secondly, Taylor both idolised and idealised his men. The language he used to describe them, ('ripping', 'splendid', 'always cheerful') which might have come straight from the pages of a newspaper, indicates the degree to which he identified with his men as their leader. Taylor would have agreed with Slim's view that the young officer's pride in his troops is such^{that he} would back 'his men' against 'the Brigade of Guards itself'. (2) Commanding men was, for Taylor, a fulfilling experience, and being of his generation, and of his social and educational background, he had no hesitation in using the word 'love' to describe his feelings for his men. Another poem, Herbert Read's 'My Company', covers much the same ground.(3)

Taylor's pride in commanding men gave birth to a sense of responsibility for them and a desire to discover each man's needs. This is in accordance with modern leadership theory. Adair's model, used by the modern British army at Sandhurst, stresses^{that} meeting the needs of the individual is one of the three essential elements of leadership. Taylor also implied that he tried to protect his men from the unfair demands of the higher echelons of the army. Taylor's sense of responsibility was mingled with sympathy for the men's condition. He tried to establish an informal relationship, mingling and conversing with

(1) Letters, 28 Apr. and 26 May 1916, G.S. Taylor papers, LHCMA.

(2) Slim, p.32.

(3) H. Read, 'My Company', in Gardner, Up The Line To Death pp.87-90. See also Fussell, pp.164-65.

them, lending a sympathetic ear to their troubles. One of Taylor's contemporaries believed when the men 'come to you with their private worries', this was a sign that the officer had won their confidence.(1)

Taylor sought to establish a relationship in which the parties were not equal, but which was characterised by mutual trust. He tried to gain the love of his men through his just treatment of them, while demonstrating that he trusted them not to take advantage of him. All of this, of course, looks at only one side of the relationship. In all probability, Taylor's view of his men was highly romanticised and naive. Taylor's men might have had a very different view of their officer, although one sergeant took the trouble to write a letter to his officer's family, nearly a year after Taylor's death on the Somme, in which he mentioned Taylor's concern for the men's welfare. (2) This brief case study does, however, offer an interesting insight into the paternal attitudes of an unusually articulate subaltern. His views were not untypical, but while in most cases one can only find brief references to the attitudes of officers towards their men, Taylor gives his feelings eloquent expression.

It would be rash to assume that officers' views of their men were always benign. A major source of annoyance was the apparent inability of the private soldier to help himself. This no doubt reinforced the officer's feeling of paternal responsibility, but it also added to his burden of work. A fairly typical comment can be found in a letter written by E. Taylor, a subaltern of 1/King's, in late 1914: 'how like children the men are. They will do nothing without us...You will see from this some reason for the percentage of casualties among officers'. Elsewhere, however, he expressed his admiration of his exasperating charges. This officer was writing of Regular soldiers, who at

(1) 'Wisdom for Warts' p.3, D. Hamond papers.

(2) T. Waterfield to Taylor's family, 29 Sept. 1917, G.S. Taylor papers, LHCMA.

that stage of the war would still have been largely working-class in origin.(1) However, it seems that the men of the New Armies were little better in this respect. A Times correspondent wrote in late 1916 that the

dependency of the men upon their own officer, while it is an immense and unwitting tribute to that officer, is at times so absolute as to be embarrassing, and in these men, who have so many of them high intelligence and a retrospect (sic) of civilian responsibility, it is surprising.

The writer went on to argue that the problem arose from the surrendering of individual liberty when the men became soldiers. The men did not become 'automatons' but since the officers are appointed to think for them 'well, they are not going to deprive him of his job...willingly, whole-heartedly they let him, and if he does it well they will follow him anywhere'.(2) In chapter 6 it was argued that this apparent helplessness was in part a natural consequence of civilian conditioning as well as the disciplinary system of the army. In sum, the institutionalising of paternalism created a sort of 'dependency culture' in which the soldier was given little incentive to help himself.

7.4 Practical Paternalism

Nevertheless, it is clear that many junior temporary officers actively disliked the system that they thought treated 'their' men unfairly. John Nettleton, who served in the ranks of the Artists' Rifles and later as an officer in a Regular unit, 2/R. Bde, commented on the lack of trust that Regular officers had for their men. Nettleton believed that Regulars' insistence on 'iron control' of other ranks at times placed the men's lives at risk, although he accepted and admired the paternalism of Regular officers. (3)

(1) Letters, 12, 13 Dec. 1914, E. Taylor papers, LULLC. See also Adams, Nothing of Importance p.29.

(2) 'A Citizen Army From Within', part III, The Times 5 Dec. 1916.

(3) Nettleton, pp.68-69, 123-24.

Another temporary officer who served in a Regular battalion, Robert Graves (2/RWF), went even further. Graves, although in many respects a far from typical subaltern, articulated the feelings of many of his peers when he wrote that he and Siegfried Sassoon believed that one of their most important duties was to 'make things easier' for their men. Graves believed that

being commanded by someone whom they [the other ranks] could count as a friend - some one who protected them...from the grosser indignities of the military system...made all the difference in the world.(1)

An example of these 'grosser indignities' was encountered in February 1917 by E.C. Vaughan, a subaltern of 1/8 R. Warwicks., when his men were forced to stand in the snow for an unnecessarily long time as a result of bad staff work. Vaughan marched into the office of a staff lieutenant and

told him vehemently, 1) That my men had marched a long way and were tired, 2) That it was damned cold outside, 3) That he had kept them waiting nearly half an hour...(2)

For Vaughan, who lacked self-confidence and had made a bad impression on joining his unit, this too was an act of moral courage in defence of his men's welfare. His action was not untypical of the way in which junior officers were prepared to take unpopular stands against their superiors in defence of what they perceived as their men's interests, although the practical expression of officers's sympathy for their men usually took a less dramatic turn. The junior officer was as much trapped by the military system as was the private, and the officer could only modify the system at the most local level.

There was often a reluctance on the part of regimental officers to punish their men. The first level of, relatively minor, punishments were awarded by the company commander at 'orderly room' or 'Company Orders'. Capt. J.H. Dible, a

(1) R. Graves, Goodbye To All That (Harmondsworth, 1960 edn.) p.192.

(2) Vaughan, pp.25-26. For a similar incident, see unpublished account, p.43, H.D. Paviere papers, 81/19/1, IWM.

temporary RMO, wrote in 1917 that 'orderly room' could be an 'instrument of oppression and injustice' instead of an impartial court: there was a fine line between 'Discipline and Tyranny'. The avoidance of tyranny was, in Dible's opinion, not merely a matter of sympathy for the men, but it also made good military sense, because it could prevent unrest among the other ranks. (1) Similar sentiments were expressed by G.S. Taylor of 2/SF. In a letter of October 1916, written just after his battalion had come out of action, he confessed 'The thing I hate doing is holding Orderly Room & dealing out punishments such as 3 Days Confined to Camp. The men get a bad enough time anyhow'.(2)

The company commander presiding at Company Orders could, however, forward the case to the commanding officer, who could reduce men holding acting rank or take away privileges, impose stoppages of pay, or sentence the soldier to field punishment. More serious offenders could be sent for trial by Field General Courts Martial (FGCM). The nature of military punishments and discipline were considered in chapter 6, and here it will suffice to cite Charles Carrington's opinion that many FGCMs tried military crimes which would have been 'no crimes at common law, and imposed sentences which seem shocking in retrospect'. Carrington himself served on a court martial of a man accused of murder; 'I'm glad to say', he wrote many years later, 'we brought it in as manslaughter'.(3)

Given the hazards of trial by FGCM, some officers were prepared to turn a blind eye to what, in military terms, were serious crimes. There are many accounts of exhausted men being found asleep on sentry duty in the trenches, but

(1) Note of 20 Nov. 1917, J.H. Dible papers, IWM.

(2) Letter, 7 Oct. 1916, G.S. Taylor papers, LHCMA.

(3) C.E. Carrington, Soldier From the Wars Returning (London, 1965) p.172. For an example of a court martial 'lean[ing] over backwards' to ensure a soldier had a fair trial, see Nettleton, p.166; for an officer's reactions to the court martial of another officer, see R. Devonald-Lewis, (ed.) From the Somme to the Armistice: The Memoirs of Captain Stormont Gibbs, MC (London, 1986) pp.161-62.

according to Pte. A.M. Burrage, a middle-class soldier who was often critical of the military system, officers were usually 'too decent to make a song about it'.(1) The trick was for the officer to wake the sentry up without acknowledging that the soldier was asleep. The officer could thus both adhere to the spirit of military law and demonstrate his sympathy with an exhausted man. Even more importantly, he could save the soldier from the full rigour of the disciplinary code. An officer of 1/20 Londons on discovering 'one of my best men' asleep, fired a Very pistol to wake him up. As a ranker, Nettleton was discovered sleeping during Stand To, and was whacked across the behind with an officer's cane. 'Quite irregular' he commented, but he 'felt no resentment at the time'. (2)

W.R. Acklam, a ranker of 41st Divisional Artillery, recorded in 1917 that a drunken bombardier had sworn at an officer who was entering the canteen: "Get out, get out you bloody ugly bugger". Fortunately for the soldier, the officer, Mr Mason, 'took no notice & went away'. Mason was acting in character, since he was an approachable man and, after an uncertain start, a steady growth of affection and respect for Mason can be traced in Acklam's diary.(3) This case neatly demonstrates the dilemma that paternal officers, perhaps with no great love for the niceties of military law, could be placed in by the misbehaviour of their men - did their duty lie in the strict enforcement of discipline, or in the protection of their soldiers? 2/Lt. Bowker of 9/W. Yorks. experienced a similar clash of loyalties. One of his men was accused of stealing boots from a store, and Bowker knew perfectly well that the man was guilty. But Bowker thought that the thief genuinely believed that he was merely exchanging a pair

(1) [A.M. Burrage] 'Ex-Pte.-X' , War is War (London, 1930) p.74.

(2) G.H. Cole, KRS Q; Nettleton, p.200.

(3) Diary, 9 Jan. 1917, W.R. Acklam papers, 83/23/1, IWM.

of old boots for a new pair. Bowker decided that he had a duty to 'run him in' or the entire fatigue party 'would have absolutely refitted itself at the expense of ordnance', but he then protected the soldier by refusing to swear that the boots the man was wearing were stolen. This neat compromise - enforcing military discipline, in spirit if not to the letter, while protecting his errant charge from punishment - earned Bowker a stiff lecture from a senior officer.(1)

Another way that regimental officers could spare offenders from harsh punishments was to impose their own form of rough justice. 'Will you accept my award, or will you go before the CO?' was (and is) a common formula used by company commanders. Commanding officers could similarly present an offender with the choice of accepting a relatively mild punishment or electing to go before a court martial, although some officers met their match in 'old soldiers' who knew their rights under military law.(2) In 1918 a company commander of 2/4 KOYLI dealt with a case of a self-inflicted wound by sentencing the offender - a youngster who had experienced some kind of a breakdown - to shoot the rabid dogs that roamed the area. If military law had taken its course, the boy would have been court martialled and would have probably received a severe sentence. (3) Such a sympathetic use of the wide discretion given to company commanders was common, and may be accounted a good example of practical paternalism in action.(4)

It would be tedious to list every other practical manifestation of the sympathy that many officers felt for their men. However, a private of 15/RWF wrote a fictional, but wholly convincing, vignette of a moment of leisure snatched in a busy day behind the lines which neatly captures one facet of the

(1) Letter, 16 Feb. 1916, H.A. Bowker papers, LULLC. For a similar example, see D. Williams, 'An Artilleryman's War 1914-19', ST 29, (1990) p.27.

(2) J.L. McWilliams and R.J. Steel, The Suicide Battalion (St. Catharines, Ontario, nd) p.186; Eberle, p.73.

(3) Turner and Haigh, pp.86-87.

(4) Carrington, Soldier from the Wars p.170.

paternal subaltern:

Platoon drill was tiresome, but Mr. Jenkins was kind. He used to sit by the little stream where they got their washing-water, and look into it for long at a time without moving, whilst they smoked under the turnip-stack, with someone watching to see if anyone - the Adjutant, or that shit Major Lillywhite, was anywhere about.(1)

7.5 Balancing Discipline and Friendship: A Case Study of 2/21 Londons

One matter, absolutely central to the whole question of officer-man relations, has yet to be addressed: how could officers demonstrate friendship for their men and yet retain their authority? Capt. Hamond, in his unpublished treatise on officership, had some firm, common-sense views on this question. He stated that men will follow an officer who has a strong, attractive personality and who 'personally looks after their bellies and beds'. However, he continued, 'any form of familiarity that lowers your own position' should be instantly checked, 'but for God's sake don't always be thinking about your own dignity, it should be there without any possibility of mistake for everyone to see'. In sum, the officer needed to tread a narrow line between paternalistic friendship for his men, and undue familiarity. (2)

An interesting practical example of how easy it was to cross this line occurs in a book written shortly after the war. The author was Rowlands Coldicott, a company commander in 2/21 Londons, who served in France and later in Palestine. Coldicott was a Territorial officer with no illusions about the limitations of Regular-style discipline when applied to his men: 'Nothing on earth...could turn our clerks into members of a regular army...'(3) Yet Coldicott, a paternal officer with considerable sympathy for his men, felt it necessary to remonstrate with one of his subalterns, 'Trobus', over his relationship with his platoon.

(1) D. Jones, In Parenthesis (London, 1963 edn.) p.15.

(2) 'Wisdom for Warts', p.9, D. Hamond papers. See also 'Mark VII', p.21.

(3) R. Coldicott, London Men in Palestine (London, 1919) p.125.

Trobus liked to surround himself with

his admirers, to whom he would tell stories, reaping huge admiration thereby...He was popular, and liked, but at the expense of something common to both parties that ought not to have been sacrificed.

Trobus's men, in Coldicott's opinion, were taking advantage of his good nature by marching sloppily, and more importantly, by falling out unnecessarily on the march. Coldicott unfavourably compared Trobus's leadership with that of another subaltern:

"Assing along, telling tall stories to a sergeant, isn't looking after a platoon on the march...Look at number ten [platoon]. Of course they detest Jackson, but he does manage to get them along when they're whacked. What the devil does it matter if the men like you or not now? They like the fellow in the end who pulls them through and drops on them occasionally."

Coldicott knew that the terrain that they were currently marching over was not as taxing as the hills of Judea which lay ahead of them. By failing to build up his platoon's stamina, Trobus was storing up trouble for the future. Coldicott required his officers to exercise 'lynx-like' supervision of his men and was prepared, if necessary, to be harsh towards laggards in order to protect them from themselves. Trobus's relationship with his men caused him to overlook malingering ("Look at that great hulking chap Thunder, who pretended he couldn't carry his pack"). By opting for short-term popularity Coldicott felt that Trobus was risking the lives of his men. In short, the thing which Trobus's relationship with his men had 'sacrificed' was the degree of detachment from those under his command that enabled the officer to make unpopular, but essential, decisions.(1)

This passage demonstrates very neatly the problems inherent in a close, informal relationship between an officer and his men. If all of the other ranks could be relied upon to exercise self-discipline, and not to take advantage of their officer, the notion of a 'gap' between officers and men could largely be

(1) Coldicott, pp.66-70.

dispensed with. But in a less-than-perfect world it could not. Coldicott was one of the few officers to articulate this dilemma. Another was 2/Lt. R.W. McConnell (6/King's Own), who in late 1915 succinctly summarised what was probably the credo of most officers, temporary or otherwise: 'The men are all topping fellows. But one has to let them know who is master. First an officer has to be an officer, and then he become a man'.(1)

7.6 The Circumstances Which Encouraged Close Officer-Man Relations

While the transmission of the prewar ethos of paternalism and the influence of the public schools might help explain why officers regarded the welfare of their men as part of their duty, it does not entirely explain the enthusiasm that many officers showed for this task and the love and devotion that many felt for their men. Other factors, a product of the peculiar circumstances of the Great War, also need to be considered.

The age profile of British regimental officers of 1914-18 tended to extremes. Regimental officers of the prewar army were fairly young (2) and this trend was exaggerated during the war. The expansion of the army normally ensured fairly swift promotion for those Regular officers who survived. The casualty rate among junior officers was extraordinarily heavy. To give but one example, in September 1915 normal wastage rates for officers on Gallipoli were calculated at 20 per cent per month.(3) By September 1917 the casualty rate among officers resulted in most battalions being commanded by officers of 'not more than' 28 years old, and most companies by men no older than 20.(4)

(1) Housman, p.186.

(2) D. Ascoli, The Mons Star (London, 1981) pp.8, 101.

(3) Winter, Great War pp.83-92; Hamilton to Kitchener, 1 Sept. 1915, WD of A and Q MEF, WO 95/4266, PRO.

(4) Anonymous book review, AQ II No.1, (1921) p.164.

Conversely, the raising of the New Armies in 1914-15 also brought a number of older men into the army as overage subalterns. In 22/RF in 1914 approximately one-half of all officers, and one-third of all subalterns, were aged thirty-one or over, although some of these men did not go overseas or did not remain long with the battalion on active service. (1)

Many subalterns were thus of an impressionable age. Young officers enjoyed the excitement and comradeship of war, revelled in the newfound freedom after school or university and the novel responsibility of commanding men. 'Leadership, the most heady and intoxicating draught for a young man' wrote one of them, 'became a duty and a delight'.(2). F.A. Shuffrey, an officer of 11/DWR, spent his 21st birthday in the trenches. He later wrote that the experience of war was often frightening, but 'outweighing' the fear, for 'very young' men such as himself, was the fact that 'the war was still an adventure which thrilled us, stimulated as we were by comradeship much more vital than is ever found in peace'.(3) This comradeship, it is argued in the next chapter, was able to transcend the barriers of rank.

Many rankers were also young. It was not uncommon for units on the Western Front to receive drafts of eighteen year old, and in 1918, seventeen year old, soldiers.(4) It is perhaps unsurprising that boys of similar ages made friends across the rank and class divide. Some of the older officers had a literally paternal attitude towards soldiers who were of an age to be their sons. Ernest Parker, who served in the ranks of 10/DLI and was later commissioned, remembered with affection 'our dear old Bombing officer', Capt. Pumphrey, 'who said just the

(1) Sheffield, 'Effect of War Service', pp.21, 24a.

(2) [C.E. Carrington] 'C. Edmonds', A Subaltern's War (London, 1929) p.18.

(3) Unpublished account, p.40, FAS/3, F.A. Shuffrey papers, PP/MCR/261, IWM.

(4) Such a draft arrived at 6/Northants. early in 1918. Letter, 14 Feb. 1918, C.E.G Parry Okeden papers, 90/7/1, IWM. For the experience of a young soldier, see F.J. Hodges, Men of 18 in 1918 (Ilfracombe, 1988) passim.

right things to encourage a youngster like me'.(1) Some older officers sympathised with men of their own age who were enduring conditions in the ranks (see chapter 8).

Many officers came to admire the fortitude and stoicism displayed by their men in enduring the conditions of trench warfare while enjoying few of the comforts available to officers. Expressions of admiration are frequently found in officers' writings. 'A private's life out here is a very rotten one', an officer of a New Army unit, 9/DWR, confided to this diary in 1916, ' - the more one thinks about it, the more one admires the men - they're absolutely wonderful to stick what they do stick...' (2) Capt. Shuffrey thought that the spirit of the ordinary soldier in enduring the hardships of military life was a major factor in winning the war. (3) In retrospect, one officer admired men for enduring life at the bottom of the military hierarchy, while retaining 'their individuality and their courage'.(4)

The rationale behind the disparity in the army's treatment of officers and men was that, having greater responsibilities, officers were entitled to more comfort. However, very occasionally, one detects in officers' writings a twinge of guilt that they had privileges denied to their men.(5) Officers who had previously served in the ranks in particular knew only too well what ordinary soldiers had to endure. 'When I think of the men who have none of my 1,000 comforts', a subaltern wrote in February 1916, 'I am glad that I didn't stay in the [ranks of the] 16th Middlesex'. (6) On the 1918 March Retreat, a self-confessed 'stoney-hearted' RMO (Regimental Medical Officer) discovered for

(1) E. Parker, Into Battle (London, 1964) p.36, 38.

(2) Diary, 15 May 1916, J.W.B. Russell papers, LULLC. See also G. Frankau, Peter Jackson - Cigar Merchant (London, nd) p.60; J. Gillam, Gallipoli Diary (Stevenage, 1989 edn.) p.52.

(3) Diary, 1 Apr. 1919, F.C. Shuffrey papers, FAS/7, PP/MCR/261, IWM.

(4) V. Bartlett, No Man's Land (London, 1930) p.168.

(5) W.R. Bion, The Long Week-End 1897-1917 (Abingdon, 1982) p.119.

(6) Letter, 12 Feb. 1916, C.R. Stone papers, IWM.

the first time what it was like to be utterly exhausted. As a consequence his attitude towards men reporting sick 'changed entirely'. Significantly, the adoption of a more sympathetic approach by this RMO did not alter his basic attitude towards his men, for he had always taken 'an intense parental pride' in his battalion, 8/Queen's. (1) Another RMO, J.H. Dible, was angered by the question of leave, which was available once every six or seven months for the officer, but once in every fifteen to eighteen months for the soldier. Dible felt that this disparity was 'inexcusable', (2) and his anger was shared by Haig. If anything, the disparity grew more pronounced as the war went on, for in 1918 a scheme was introduced which gave junior officers the opportunity of serving for six months in Britain. (3) The only equivalent for other ranks was the granting of leave to pre-war Regular and Territorials whose period of service would, under normal circumstances, have expired. (4) As will be discussed below, many officers had particular sympathy for educated, middle-class rankers who under other circumstances might have found themselves in the officers' mess.

Although officer-man relations were undoubtedly good in newly-raised units in 1914-15, when officers and men who had only recently joined the army learned the business of soldiering together, it was often said that officer-man relations were, in general, much closer on active service than at home. An ASC private, a former miner, believed that the officers on the Western Front and their counterparts in England were very different creatures. Those he had

(1) Unpublished account, p.69, C.J. Lodge Patch papers, IWM 86/9/1.

(2) Note, 11 Nov. 1917, pp.179-80, J.H. Dible papers, IWM. In December 1917, Haig commented on the disparity with the French, whose soldiers were given leave every four months. S. Fay, The War Office at War (Wakefield, 1973 edn.) p.106.

(3) Circular from Military Secretary to C-in-C, 9 Jan. 1918, P. Ingleson papers, LULLC.

(4) Until 1916, thousands of men were leaving the army on expiry of their service. F.W. Perry, The Commonwealth armies (Manchester, 1988) p.18; The Times 6 Apr. 1916.

encountered in training camps at home, he said, had mainly been Regular officers, who regarded wartime soldiers as mere cannon fodder to be trained as quickly as possible. In France, by contrast, officers 'had been through the mill, had recently been civilians themselves, and so were in sympathy with those they commanded' and traditional discipline was 'largely ignored in favour of "esprit de corps"'.(1) Later in the war convalescent temporary officers also served in camps in England, but an infantry officer who first arrived in France at the end of 1917 expressed very similar sentiments. Commenting shortly after his arrival on the high level of esprit de corps in his battalion (2/4 DWR), he wrote: 'The spirit of the Army out here is quite different from what it is in England. The men are fine & the officers are their comrades'.(2)

In contrast to the situation which existed in Britain, where the important role played by the NCO in training minimised contact between officers and other ranks, the conditions on the Western Front were exceptionally favourable to the establishment of close relationships between leaders and led. Regimental officers and other ranks alike lived in rat and vermin-infested holes in the ground, although the officer's hole was usually better appointed, and all shared much the same discomforts caused by weather. Shells and bullets were no respecters of rank, and indeed officers were more likely to become casualties than other ranks. It is important that the gulf between the officer and the ranker should not be underestimated. This is graphically illustrated by a 1/N. Staffs. officer's comment that his working-class soldiers were 'bilingual'. Among themselves, the rankers spoke a language virtually incomprehensible to a middle-class officer. When addressing an officer they used 'pukka talk'.(3) The officer's lot was, in general, far better than that of the other rank (see

(1) Unpublished account, p.4, J. Woollin papers, PP/MCR/110, IWM.

(2) Notebook I, B.D. Parkin papers, 86/57/1, IWM.

(3) Martin, p.131.

above). (1) However, the regimental officer's experience of warfare had far more in common with that of the private than it did with ^{that} of the general.

Constant patrolling of the trenches and supervision of various activities ensured that there was constant contact between the officers and men in the trenches.(2) One subaltern noted that even 'the most taciturn' sentry would talk when visited at night by an officer.(3) Capt. B.G. Buxton (1/6 DWR) recalled that

I would go round the lines, perhaps between two and three a.m. on a soaking day, and a sentry would turn on the fire step and make a remark. I would get up by him, and he would tell me of some problem at his home - a child ill; anxiety about the loyalty of his wife; whatever it might be; and we would talk it over together. It was a wonderful human relationship, not least seeing that I was often ten or twenty years younger than he.(4)

Under some circumstances, such ^{as} when holding 'elastic' defensive positions in the spring of 1918, small parties of men commanded by an officer might have to man isolated posts for days at a time. In 1915-16 trench warfare 'was carried on by small detached units, companies split into platoons and parties, who seldom saw their own battalion headquarters'.(5) Inevitably under such conditions officers and men were forced into a degree of intimacy, and opportunities arose for fraternisation between what one temporary infantry officer described as the men who took 'nine-tenths of the risk and ...[did] practically all the hard work in the Army...the private and the subaltern'.(6) An example of informal fraternisation occurred in August 1917 when a gunner of the RGA was trapped in a dugout by intense shelling along with some officers,

(1) I.F.W. Beckett, 'The British Army, 1914-18: The Illusion of Change' in J. Turner (ed.) Britain and the First World War (London, 1988) p.107.

(2) Sheffield, 'Effect of War Service', pp.57-58.

(3) 'Mark VII', p.95.

(4) B.G. Buxton, KRS Q.

(5) R.H. Mottram, 'A Personal Record' in R.H. Mottram et al Three Personal Records of the War (London, 1929) pp.62-63.

(6) I. Hay, The First Hundred Thousand (Edinburgh, 1916) p.297.

who 'began to talk of guns and all sorts of things. Then tea was made and an officer went out and fetched it from the cooks (sic) dugout. Had good feed'. (1) One officer declared that the 'characters of any officer or man when under fire were laid to the bare'. (2) After spending eight days in the line in July 1916, enduring heavy shelling, Lt. R.E. Wilson (1/4 York and Lancs.) wrote 'officers & men have suffered and worked together & have come to regard each other as real men...'. (3) Active service, a Regular officer of the Devons noted, highlighted the importance of 'looking after' his men. (4) Some officers came to believe that they formed what might be termed a 'community of the trenches' with their men (see chapter 9). It is also relevant to note that there were many occasions on which temporary subalterns were out of the reach of their superiors. Under such conditions, junior officers were under less pressure to conform to Regular norms of behaviour towards their men than would have been the case behind the lines. It is significant that discipline in small units such as machine gun companies and trench mortar batteries, commanded by captains, was in many cases more relaxed than in larger units such as infantry battalions (see Appendix 2).

7.7 Commanding Officers, Padres, Medical Officers, Generals and Staff Officers

This thesis is mainly concerned with relations between other ranks and junior regimental (platoon and company) officers. However, a brief examination of the relationship of other types of officer with their men is necessary to complete the picture. Individual commanding officers have been discussed elsewhere. COs usually held the rank of lieutenant colonel in infantry battalions and major

(1) Diary, 16 Aug. 1917, P. Fraser papers, 85/32/1, IWM.

(2) L. Humphreys, KRS Q.

(3) Letter, 9 July 1916, R.E. Wilson, KRS Q.

(4) A.H. Cope, KRS Q.

in artillery batteries, these ranks often being held on a temporary basis. The ideal CO was a benevolent paternal figure. One padre in 1918 went as far as to describe the Almighty as 'a gallant and fatherly Colonel who went over the top with his men'.(1) Some COs were indeed loved by their men. A private of 1/4 R. Sussex declared that 'I would do anything for our colonel as he is a real gentleman & leader of men & is liked by all the ranks'.(2) An NCO of 5/Welsh noted in his diary the general sense of loss at the death of Lt.Col. Pridham, whom he described as a 'good man'.(3) However, comments such as these must be balanced by other, less complimentary remarks by soldiers of other units for whom their CO was a remote figure who had little apparent impact on their lives, for it took a particularly dynamic personality to impose itself on a unit as large as an infantry battalion.(4)

The personality of the CO could shape the character of a unit.(5) Moving from inspecting one training unit to another in May 1916, Maj.Gen. G.G.A. Egerton found himself 'in a different world altogether', the principal difference between the two units being the characters of the respective COs.(6) On active service the influence, for good or ill, of the unit commander was even more important. In the autumn of 1917 the poor leadership of the CO of 11/Argylls demoralised the men, who made obscene remarks about him within earshot of their officers, who shared their men's opinions. His successor possessed all the qualities he lacked; 'efficiency', 'sense of duty' 'common sense' 'good humour', and this new broom revitalised morale in the unit.(7) A

(1) G.A. Studdert-Kennedy, 'Religious Difficulties' in F.B. MacNutt, (ed.) The Church in the Furnace (London, 1918) p.391.

(2) Diary, 17 Feb. 1917, R.H. Sims papers, 77/130/1, IWM.

(3) Diary, 16 Dec. 1916. J.M. Thomas 88/56/1, IWM.

(4) N. Gladden, Somme 1916 (London, 1974) p.173; Coppard, p.13.

(5) P. Maze, A Frenchman in Khaki (London, 1934) p.270.

(6) Notebook I, pp.31-33, G.G.A. Egerton papers, 73/51/1, IWM.

(7) Diary, 25 Oct, 31 Dec. 1917, R.L. Mackay papers, IWM.

rather similar situation existed in a divisional battery in early 1918, where an unpopular commander caused morale to sink. The mere arrival of his replacement caused the tension to relax. (1) It is important to note that the fact that a commanding officer was popular and paternal did not necessarily mean that he was efficient. A Liberal politician, Sir George McCrae, raised and commanded 16/R.Scots (2nd Edinburgh City battalion). Following the battalion's failure in an action in August 1916, his divisional commander reported that although McCrae was personally gallant and always cheerful, and his men were devoted to him, his deficiencies as a commander (which, it was hinted, included a reluctance to accept casualties) rendered him unfit to command a battalion on active service. McCrae was appointed to command a reserve unit.(2)

The average private would have encountered the average CO much less frequently than other, more junior officers. However the commanding officer could have considerable influence on the state of officer-man relations within a unit. The sheer power wielded by the CO over the lives of his men was impressive; he was well placed to modify the military system, or conversely, enforce the disciplinary code with utmost rigour. In some cases the attitude of the CO to officer-man relations and discipline could set the tone for all the officers of the unit (see chapters 6 and 9). Since commanding officers were very often Regular soldiers, sometimes with a substantive rank as low as captain, they could provide a valuable thread of continuity with the prewar army, passing on the Regular tradition of paternalism to temporary officers.

Chaplains (or padres) and RMOs are also discussed, on an individual basis, elsewhere in this thesis. Neither were, formally, combatant officers, and thus

(1) P.J. Campbell, 'The Ebb and Flow of Battle' in In the Cannon's Mouth (London, 1986 edn.) p.203. See also 'F.O.O.', The Making of a Gunner (London, 1916) p.101.

(2) Report by Maj.Gen. Nicholson, GOC 34th Division on operations of 16/R.Scots, 3/4 Aug. 1916, in Sir. G. McCrae papers, LHCMA.

their relations with rankers were inevitably slightly unusual. RMOs could have a great influence on the fate of individuals. A soldier coming to an RMO with an ailment might be treated sympathetically, which could mean a man being excused trench duty, or he might receive 'medicine and duty'. Thus the RMO constantly had to judge whether or not a soldier was shamming sickness. Individual RMOs were largely judged by rankers on the basis of their compassion (or, to put it another way, their leniency). Capt. Lodge Patch, RMO of 8/Queen's, was regarded by his men as callous and nicknamed 'Iodine Dick', a judgement which receives some confirmation from Lodge Patch himself (see above).(1) By contrast, a private recorded in his diary his admiration of the RMO of 10/Essex, who had worked unstintingly with the wounded after an action. (2) It seems that rankers tended to judge RMOs, like line officers, by the criteria of paternalism and courage.

Padres had to overcome a number of difficulties to establish close relationships with rankers. There was inherent tension between the padre's spiritual role and his position in the military hierarchy. In the words of one divisional chaplain, the padre's status as an officer was 'a hindrance to overcome; it removes him to a distance'.(3) Padres could, however, use their anomalous position to good effect, moving 'between the ranks with diplomacy and understanding'.(4) In some cases, restrictions were placed on padres visiting the trenches, which automatically set up a barrier between soldiers who had experienced the stress of trench warfare, and padres who had not. Those padres who did visit the trenches could form rewarding relationships with rankers.(5)

While some soldiers were impressed by the spiritual side of the padre's work,

(1) Unpublished account, p.38, A.J. Abraham papers, P.191, IWM.

(2) Diary, 2 May 1917, R. Cude papers, IWM.

(3) M. Linton-Smith, 'Fellowship in the Church' in MacNutt, p.110.

(4) M. Brown, The Imperial War Museum Book of the First World War (London, 1991) p.247.

(5) Linton-Smith, pp.109-113.

the rule of thumb being that the greater the degree of sharing of the soldier's conditions by the padre, the greater attention paid to the Christian message, (1) it appears that chaplains were also judged by criteria unrelated to their effectiveness as priests. Capt. Noel Mellish VC, the padre of 4/RF, had, according to a private, the 'men's interests and comfort always in his mind', once rigging up a makeshift swimming pool for the men with the help of some pioneers.(2) The chaplain attached to 32nd TMB was similarly admired for his courage and paternalism, receiving a considerable compliment from one ranker, a Yorkshire miner: '"He's a man is our padre."'(3) The most effective chaplains were those who had their full complement of courage and paternalism, allied to the ability to overcome the barriers of rank and class. It is instructive to compare rankers' views of two padres who served with 22/RF. The first, E.P. St. John MC, was a jovial, soldierly, paternal figure, popular with all ranks. His successor, C.E. Raven, a noted theologian and the Dean of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, was by contrast largely ignored by his military flock. Raven, as his wartime letters reveal, was a lonely and isolated figure, who failed to adjust to the demands of ministering to an infantry battalion on the Western Front.(4)

Few bodies of men have been subjected to as much vilification as the generals and staff officers of the British army of the Great War. A number of former soldiers of all ranks, and many historians, have taken the view that they were remote from the fighting soldiers, callous, and incompetent.(5) Senior officers who fulfilled the criteria of paternalism and courage could however be admired by other ranks. Plumer, commander of Second Army, achieved a reputation as a

(1) Brown, Imperial War Museum p.247.

(2) A. Brown, Destiny (Bognor, 1979) pp.5-6.

(3) Artillery and Trench Mortar Memories p.672.

(4) Sheffield, 'Effect of War Service' pp.25-26, 73.

(5) See for example, Siegfried Sassoon's poem 'The General' in Gardner, Up the Line to Death p.97 and A. Clark, The Donkeys (London, 1961).

'caring' general who did not waste his men's lives.(1) At a much lower level, two brigadier-generals, F.W. Lumsden VC and R.O. Kellett, commanders of 14th and 99th Infantry brigades respectively, were well thought of by other ranks. All three commanders were admired for their bravery, paternalism or both. A private of 5/6 R. Scots described Lumsden as

one of the very best. Wearing his cheesecutter with red tabs...just as if he had been on the parade ground, he went into the front line trenches amid all the mud, barbed wire etc... (2)

Rather than generalising about soldiers' attitudes to 'the generals', it is necessary to examine each case on its individual merits.

Inevitably, staff officers' duties made it difficult for them to demonstrate courage or paternalism, although it should be noted that the term 'staff officer' is a broad one and the position of, say, a captain on the staff of a brigade could at times be highly dangerous. Inevitably, the staff were seen by some as gilded popinjays, living in the lap of luxury, in stark contrast to front line soldiers.(3) In reality, staff work was unglamorous and exhausting. As Charles Carrington pointed out, animosity between fighting soldiers and the staff had a long tradition that certainly predated the Great War.(4) However, when the infantry were victims of bad staff work, their bitterness came to the fore. (5) Other rear echelon officers were also loathed. Pte. J. Woollin described a Railway Transport Officer encountered on his way to demobilisation in 1919 as 'omnipotent. The serving soldier was to him merely a unit to be entered on the forms he filled'.(6) Ironically, Woollin himself, as a member of the ASC, would have been envied and despised by many infantrymen.

(1) G. Powell, Plumer: The Soldier's General (London, 1990) p.281; Mottram, Journey p.27.

(2) D. Clarkson, Memoirs of A Company Runner (Edinburgh, 1972) p.18. For Kellett, see Sheffield, 'War Service' pp.68-71.

(3) P.R. Munday, KRS Q; unpublished account, p.1, S. Ragget papers, 90/1/1, IWM.

(4) Carrington, Soldier from the Wars p.99.

(5) Smith, Four Years p.187.

(6) Unpublished account, p.8, J. Woollin papers, PP/MCR/110, IWM.

Lecturing to Staff College students in 1938, an officer who had served with an infantry battalion in 1914-15 stated that, from the perspective of the frontline soldier, good generals and staff officers were distinguished by 'man mastership' (ie man-management). Those who visited units in the trenches during dangerous periods or after a unit had returned from battle were 'amply rewarded by increased confidence on [the part] of the regimental officers and men'.(1) It might be argued that unpopular staff officers and generals helped to define relations between regimental officers and men. The colonel of a battalion was usually the highest ranking officer who was regarded as 'one of "us"', as part of a community.(2) As has been demonstrated above, defending their men against the unfair demands of higher command could give regimental officers a focus for their paternalism, while, it will be suggested in future chapters, soldiers' morale was enhanced by the knowledge that their officers were behaving in such a fashion. By appearing to both regimental officers and other ranks as an enemy against which they could unite, unpopular generals and staff officers helped to turn military units into cohesive communities.

7.8 'Temporary Gentlemen' and Officer-Man Relations

The broadening of the social base of the officer class did not meet with universal approval. In the early years of the war there was some fairly predictable criticism in the press on the grounds of social snobbery, which can be summed up in the perjorative phrase 'temporary gentlemen'.(3) This term needs to be clarified. Some temporary officers adopted it out of a perverse form of pride. Dennis Wheatley, a man of some social standing, entitled his war

(1) Col. M.G.N. Stopford, lecture, p.13, Conf. 3898, SCL.

(2) Carrington, Soldier from the Wars p.100.

(3) For an example, see Mr Punch's History of the Great War p.123.

memoirs Officer and Temporary Gentleman. (1) A temporary officer could be a man with a public school education who had initially enlisted in the ranks, or he could be a man of lower middle-class or even working-class origins. There were certainly occasions when temporary officers lived up to their unflattering image by committing faux pas such as arriving at the exclusive Sudan club riding a camel, or using red or green ink to apply for their commissions. (2) However, some Regular officers genuinely believed that men lacking a traditional social and educational background would also lack paternalism, and would therefore make poor officers.

A newly commissioned old Etonian subaltern, J.E.H. Neville, of the socially prestigious 52nd Light Infantry (2/OBLI), described an officer of 23/RF as 'a most temporary gentleman'. 'A man like that gives himself away badly', Neville claimed in a letter of 7 January 1917,

because he shows at once that he has not got the spirit of his regiment, or he would not run down another better than his own. Heaven help the Army if chaps of his kidney are going to be its officers of the future. (3)

A more measured but essentially similar opinion was that of R.T. Rees, a public schoolmaster serving as a temporary infantry officer. He was to write that although non-public school officers 'often made good', it took time for them 'to acquire the sense of responsibility and facility of leadership' which was fostered by the public schools: 'We had some anxious moments at first because of the lack of these qualities'. (4) Much the same fear was implicit in the views of the Adjutant-General at GHQ, who in May 1915 suggested that Regular officers serving in New Army and Territorial units should not command companies

(1) D. Wheatley, Officer and Temporary Gentleman (London, 1978).

(2) Unpublished account, p.22, W.G. Wallace papers, LHCMA; Parsons to Secretary, WO, 29 Nov. 1914, Sir L.W. Parsons papers, LHCMA.

(3) J.E.H. Neville, The War Letters of a Light Infantryman (London, 1930) p.6.

(4) R.T. Rees, A Schoolmaster at War (London, nd) p.79.

or 'expose themselves unnecessarily, as it is impossible to find regular officers to replace them'.(1)

Although these assumptions died extremely hard - controversies occurred on similar lines during the Second World War and in the 1960s (2) - these views were by no means held by all public school educated officers of the Great War. In the 1930s Maj.Gen. Sir Ernest Swinton roundly denounced views that the officers of 1918 were 'poor in quality' as 'largely rubbish'. Swinton conceded that in the circumstances it was not surprising that officers were only half-trained but 'they did their best, and what more could a man do?', implying that the performance of such men was all the more remarkable for their lack of training.(3) One retrospective view which is particularly worthy of attention is that of Hubert Essame, who served as a Regular subaltern in the 2/Northants. in 1918, and who subsequently became a distinguished general and military historian. Essame emphasised the importance of the junior officer in the battles of 1918, but stressed that the junior commissioned ranks were no longer dominated by the public school educated officers. In 1918 regimental officers were drawn from a number of 'levels of society', forming a society 'based on mutual loyalty and trust from which distinctions of class had long since vanished.' However, the Regular code of officer-man relations, with all that implied in terms of paternalism, was adhered to by the temporary officers of 1918.(4) There is little here that indicates that the quality of junior officers had deteriorated in 1918, in the sense that they were less effective as military

(1) 12 May 1915, WD, Adjutant-General, GHQ, WO 95/25, PRO.

(2) A. Calder, The People's War (London, 1971 edn.) p.285; The Times, 29 Apr. 1963.

(3) Sir. E. Swinton, in Twenty Years After II, (London, 1938) p.1188.

(4) H. Essame, The Battle For Europe, 1918 (London, 1972) pp. 12-13, 107-8, 111, 179-81. See also Barclay, pp.100-1.

leaders.

These retrospective views are buttressed by a mass of evidence of temporary officers themselves, who in the main seem to have been received into their units with the same degree of pragmatism that lay behind their commissioning in the first place. There were some exceptions, particularly at the beginning of the war, where some lower-class ranker officers were patronised and even insulted by other officers. (1) In mitigation, it might be said that the treatment of newly arrived temporary officers in 1914-15 in Regular units was in many ways a continuation of the treatment of their pre-war predecessors who received the unflattering soubriquet of 'warts'. In addition, the rapid expansion of the army at the beginning of the war undoubtedly resulted in commissions being given to men who were unfitted to hold them. (2) F.P. Crozier estimated that one in three of the officers that went to France with 9/R.I. Rif. in 1915 were 'duds', and that the proportion was probably higher in other battalions. (3) However, Regular officers, whatever their private feelings, seem to have avoided out-and-out rudeness. (4)

In the latter years of the war, when officers were selected on merit and there were fewer Regular officers serving in units, prejudice against temporary officers seems to have subsided. A ranker officer who joined the 2/RWF in June 1917 commented that there was not 'another Regular battalion where the Temporary Officer had as much fair play if he had anything in him', which presumably means that the officer was accepted if he was congenial company and attempted to behave in an officerlike fashion. (5) The latter factor was all important. 'One did not want to spend one's life in a barrack room atmosphere' a

(1) F. Moor, KRS Q.

(2) 'F.O.O.', p.121.

(3) F.P. Crozier, Impressions and Recollections (London, 1930) p.162.

(4) Sir. A. Bishop, KRS Q.

(5) Dunn, p. 357. See also Pilcher, General's Letters pp. 9, 11.

former Regular officer wrote long after the war. 'Others who may criticise this statement did not have to do so'.(1) Potentially, an even more delicate situation arose when an ex-private or NCO was returned to his former unit as an officer, and in fact most ranker-officers were posted to new units on receiving their commission. However, John Lucy, who joining 2/R.I. Rif. (a Regular battalion) as a second lieutenant in 1917, was one of many ranker officers who received a 'a warm welcome' on joining their former unit.(2)

While temporary officers were accepted readily enough as platoon, company and even battalion commanders, there was a common belief that Regular prejudice and jealousy never vanished entirely. Col. W. Robertson, GSO 1 of Second Army, complained 'We had the best brains of the Empire at our disposal, and we failed to make full use of them'. (3)

By one obvious criterion, the officers of 1917-18 may appear to have been less paternal than their predecessors. It is fairly rare to find references to them buying gifts for their men. Those references that can be found tend to be the letters of atypical officers such as chaplains and prewar Regulars.(4) This does not necessarily indicate a lack of paternalism on the part of the temporary officers of 1917-18. The British civilian population was short of food in these years, which led to some alarm in official circles at the possible impact on the morale of the BEF.(5) As an infantry private's letters demonstrate, small quantities of food could be sent out from home as late as

(1) L.H.M. Westropp, KRS Q.

(2) Lucy, p.353; G.H. Cole, KRS Q; Sheffield, 'Effect of War Service', p.61.

(3) Letter, nd, c. 1936, W. Robertson, CAB 45/137, PRO. For a discussion of this question see [B.H. Liddell Hart] 'Bardell' 'Study and Reflection v. Practical Experience', AQ, VI, No.2 (1923) pp.318-31; I.F.W. Beckett, 'The Territorial Force', in Beckett and Simpson, pp.140-3.

(4) Letter, 14 Feb., 29(?) Mar., 8 May 1918, C.E.G.Parry-Okenden papers, 90/7/1, IWM; letter, 7 May 1917, H.M. Dillon papers, IWM.

(5) 'Rationing: Food Queues: notes and memoranda on their prevention', MAF 60/243, PRO. See also Waites, 'Government of the Home Front' pp. 188-98.

the autumn of 1918 (1) but it is likely that bulk orders of 500 large mince pies (or whatever) would have presented greater difficulties.

Perhaps more importantly, many officers commissioned in 1916-18 simply would have been unable to afford large scale purchasing of gifts for their men. In 1916, a second lieutenant's pay was 7s 6d or 8s 6d per day. (2) While various allowances were made, expenses could eat up much of this pay. An officers' field kit from Humphreys and Crook of Haymarket cost £7 1s 9d. A mess bill of a subaltern of 2/7 Middlesex in England in July 1915 amounted to £3 16s 4d, after a messing allowance had been deducted from the original bill. (3) On joining a Regular battalion in France in 1916, Nettleton was horrified to find that his first week's mess bill exceeded his pay. (4) While some officers may well have been reasonably well-off on active service, (5) others, particularly poorer men who sent money home to their families, would not have had sufficient spare cash to buy gifts in bulk for their men on a regular basis. That was the prerogative of the moderately affluent officer, of whom there were decreasing numbers in the British army of 1917-18.

By 1917-18 officers were usually selected because they had demonstrated leadership or leadership potential on the battlefield as privates or NCOs. (6) Given the fact that the BEF's morale remained high, and that a wealth of evidence, examined in chapter 9, suggests that there is a connection between leadership and morale, it may be argued that the 'traditional' view of the attributes of an officer - summarised by Keith Simpson as the possession of 'a certain style of dress, behaviour and speech which had to be quite different

(1) Letters, nd and 12 Oct. 1918, A.H. Swettenham papers, 83/31/1, IWM.

(2) T. O'Toole, The Way They Have in the Army (London, 1916) p.163.

(3) These figures are drawn from items in H.F. Bowser papers, 88/56/1, IWM.

(4) Nettleton, p.57.

(5) Simpson, 'The Officers' p.77; Mellersh, p.56.

(6) R.H. Arhrenfeldt, Psychiatry in the British Army in the Second World War (London, 1958) p.51.

from that of the rank and file' (1) - was, by 1918, outmoded. The average temporary regimental officer of 1918, unlike his public school educated predecessor of 1914, was a 'professional' in the sense that he had earned his commission on the battlefield, rather than attaining it through the possession of social and educational advantages. He was no less imbued with paternalism, however. This last point can be illustrated by reference to a revealing passage in an autobiographical novel which displays the thought processes of a 'temporary gentleman'.

'Phillip Maddison', newly commissioned into the 'Gaultshires' from the ranks of a Territorial unit, is invited to drink tea with some of his men:

[He] had...made a point of speaking to each man by name...He must imitate the Duke's way, in the Gaultshires, according to "Spectre" West, [a senior officer] of asking questions about their homes, encouraging them to speak... He wanted to leave while the good impression of him remained. Should he say Goodnight, men, as was correct, or Goodnight, you fellows? Which?

"Goodnight, boys!"

"Goodnight, sir!" in instant chorus...[He was jubilant that] at last, he felt that he belonged to the men of his platoon, as they to him...(2)

The career of the author of this passage, Henry Williamson, closely paralleled that of his fictional alter ego. The passage is interesting in that it illustrates the effort made by a ranker-officer, who had an inferiority complex about his lower middle-class social origins, to conform to expected standards of paternalism by consciously imitating the behaviour of Regular officers, and his elation as he felt that his efforts were rewarded. (3)

In conclusion, the newspaper stereotype of British officer-man relations was accurate in that the vast majority of officers, Regular, Territorial or temporary, shared a common belief in the need for paternal care of their men,

(1) Simpson, 'The Officers' p.84.

(2) H. Williamson, The Golden Virgin (London, 1984 edn.) pp.225-26.

(3) For Williamson's military career and the value of his novels as historical evidence, see H. Cecil, 'Henry Williamson: Witness of the Great War' in B. Sewell, (ed.) Henry Williamson, The Man and his Works: A Symposium (Padstow, 1980) pp.69-82.

and many officers' paternalism developed into deep affection for their men. The next chapter will look at the question of officer-man relations mainly from the perspective of the other rank.

Chapter 8

Officer-Man Relations - The Rankers' Perspective

In this chapter the officer-man relationship will be examined from the standpoint of the ordinary soldier. It will be shown that the ranker's perception of the relationship was in some ways similar, but in others dissimilar, from that of the officer. In keeping with the general concept of deference, soldiers were not prepared to respect officers merely because they held the King's commission.⁽¹⁾ Rather, the soldier's respect had to be earned by the officer, who had to demonstrate a number of leadership qualities. The nature of relations between officers of lower-class origin and their men will then be examined, as will officer-NCO relations. Finally, the validity of the concept of a British 'war generation' will be evaluated.

8.1 The Qualities of a Good Officer: Other Ranks' Views

Working-class rankers tended to judge officers by a simple set of criteria. According to Pte. W.V. Tilsey (2/5 LF), a 'Derby' man, rankers believed that officers fell into [one of] two categories. If they passed dirty rifles, handled a spade, or carried a bag of cement, they were "aw reet". If not, they were "no bloody bon."

A middle-class volunteer, Pte. Ivor Gurney of 2/5 Gloucesters., recorded the views of his working-class comrades in similar terms:

A bad officer, that is, a bully, is a _____! A good officer, that is, a (sic) considerate, is "a toff". "I'd follow him anywhere". "The men's friend;" or simply, but in significant tones, "gentleman"!

(1) F. Manning, The Middle Parts of Fortune (London, 1977 edn.) p.75.

(2) V.W. Tilsey, Other Ranks (London, 1931) p.126.

(3) I. Gurney, (R.K.R. Thornton, ed.) War Letters (London, 1984) p.217.

Other ranks tended to judge officers almost entirely in terms of the deferential dialectic. More simply, the ranker's view of his officer was largely determined by the way the officer behaved towards him, as at least one officer realised.(1) Officers had to juggle two aspects of their duties. They had to be militarily efficient, but also had to protect their men, and these two roles could sometimes conflict. This meant that a ranker's view of his officer could vary according to the circumstances. A ranker recalled that on one occasion hungry, cold men on a long march took a dim view of even a normally popular officer, but that attitude changed to one of genuine gratitude when the officers provided a surprise Christmas dinner for the men. (2)

Other factors were far less important in determining a soldier's perception of an officer. Rank in itself was almost irrelevant. The mere fact that a man possessed the King's commission was not enough to inspire the respect of those whom he commanded. Strict disciplinarians were not necessarily unpopular, as they could also possess other qualities, such as courage, of which the men approved. (3) An officer's youth was not necessarily a barrier to winning his men's approval. In later life, Lt. W.R. Bion (Tank Corps) wondered if anybody, 'outside of a public-school culture, believe in the fitness of a boy of nineteen to officer troops in battle?' The answer was that the non-public school classes of 1914-18 accepted nineteen-year-old boys as military leaders provided the latter behaved in an officer-like manner. An incident in Bion's career suggests that a form of reverse paternalism could exist, in which rankers made concessions to the youth of officers. When his tank broke down in action in 1917, Bion was calmed by the thirty-eight year old 'grandfather' of the crew

(1) 'Mark VII', pp.101-102.

(2) Privately published article, L.B. Stanley papers, LULLC.

(3) See the views of a gunner of 61st Divisional Artillery on his CO, Maj. Harris, expressed in letters and diary entries; unpublished account, pp.47, 61, 78, S.L.C. Edwards papers, IWM.

who showed him photographs of his family. (1) Pte. Clarkson of 5/6 R. Scots recalled that green young officers were inclined to try teach old sweats their business, as it were, but nevertheless, he admired their courage.(2)

Pte. A. Jobson (39th Division Field Ambulance) placed officers into three categories: 'Good, Bad and perfectly B...y'. (3) While this oversimplifies the ambiguities inherent in the officer-man relationship, Jobson's view may be interpreted as meaning that good officers fulfilled their paternal role, bad officers did not, while 'perfectly B...y' officers were those who were deliberately unpleasant or oppressive towards the men. Broadly speaking, there were three major reasons why officers were disliked by other ranks: failures in paternalism; failures of leadership; and deliberate unpleasantness.

Possibly the most important factor in determining a soldier's attitude to his officer was the extent to which he cared for the wellbeing of his men. The diary of a ranker of 27th Division Ammunition Column shows a direct correlation between his low morale and poor conditions and food, for which he blamed his officers: 'Rotten lot of officers - they are alright but they don't mind about us'.(4) (The relationship between paternalism and morale is considered at length in chapter 9). Rankers also expected by their men to show leadership qualities in battle. Pte. S.B. Abbot (86th M.G. Coy.) condemned one of his officers (nicknamed 'The Orphan') as a 'thruster', prepared to endanger his men's lives by unnecessary displays of excess zeal in 'strafing' the enemy positions, while simultaneously appearing to be over-concerned for his own safety. Abbot implicitly compared The Orphan with another officer, referred to respectfully as Mr Street, who was 'a splendid man', a paternalist who was mourned as

(1) Bion, p.133.

(2) Clarkson, p.19.

(3) Jobson, p.186.

(4) Diary, 1, 14, 20 Jan. 1915, J.W. Gower papers, 88/56/1, IWM.

'our brave and kind officer' when he was killed in April 1917.(1) The essence of leadership is diverting the cohesion of the group into the ends desired by the military hierarchy, but this example demonstrates that if officers are perceived to be too eager to take risks, and thus jeopardise their troops, at the very least they forfeit the respect of their men. This seems to have happened, temporarily at least, in 2/R. Sussex after the battle of Aubers Ridge in May 1915. According to one sergeant, the men blamed the officers for adopting linear tactics which resulted in heavy casualties.(2) Conversely, in the eyes of his men, an officer's courage could compensate for other failings. A group of rankers, discussing their officer, were heard to say 'No that little one don't know much, but he's always about when it comes on to shell'.(3)

In general, a middle-class Territorial ranker wrote, ^{the} Officers' 'outward and visible standard of courage' was higher than that of the other ranks.(4) 'Windy' officers were usually regarded with some disgust. Both senior and junior non-commissioned ranks felt contempt for an officer of 1/13 Londons 'for showing his fear in front of the men he was supposed to be leading', by ducking on hearing shells explode, the RSM going so far as to shout at him to 'keep his head up'.(5) An officer of 22/RF was once found cowering at the bottom of a trench at the beginning of an attack; his platoon sergeant swore at him, and physically bundled him over the parapet.(6) George Coppard (37th M.G. Coy) mingled his disgust for an officer who refused to emerge from a dugout with

(1) Unpublished account, S.B. Abbot papers, 78/36/1, IWM; 28-30 Apr. 1917, WD, 86 Bde. MG Coy, WO 95/2302, PRO.

(2) Unpublished memoir, p.10, F.M. Packham papers, P.316, IWM.

(3) Nettleton, p.191.

(4) J. Gibbons, Roll On, Next War! (London, 1935) p.69.

(5) J.R. Tucker, Johnny Get Your Gun (London, 1978) p.152.

(6) Sheffield, 'War Service', p.76.

pity for his physical and mental condition. (1) Although one ex-ranker wrote of men covering up the deficiencies of 'dud' officers, this attitude does not seem to have been typical. (2) Many soldiers appeared to have shared Lord Moran's view that courage was very much a matter of character and willpower, that everyone felt fear, but only cowards gave way to it. (3) Officers were expected by their men to set an example of courage. Cowardly officers had, in the eyes of the other ranks, forfeited all right to commissioned status - and the superior conditions and privileges that went with it.

Rankers also expected their officers to behave in a fitting, gentlemanly manner when out of action. Genteel disgust at the loutish behaviour of some 'temporary gentleman' was shared by some rankers. An interesting insight into this is given by Pte. Eric Linklater (4/5 Black Watch). One evening Linklater was sitting in an estaminet with some sergeants when the peace was disturbed by a drunken, argumentative and obviously sexually aroused temporary officer chasing the hostess. The sergeants, working-class slum dwellers in civilian life, were 'incensed by such behaviour in an officer of our regiment'. (4) Officers did not have to make an exhibition of themselves to be condemned as ungentlemanly by their men. Passages in the diary of the officers' mess sergeant of a TF unit, 1/5 Buffs, indicate that he respected the original officers of the battalion, who were gentlemanly and paternal, but he disliked their replacements who lacked these qualities. The sergeant was greatly aggrieved when his pay was reduced because the six surviving officers judged that he had less

(1) Coppard, pp.117-18. See also Gibbons, p.70.

(2) Anon, 'Memories V. Concerning Officers and NCOs', Twenty Years After, supplementary vol. p.371.

(3) Moran also argued, however, that no man has an inexhaustable supply of courage. Lord Moran, The Anatomy of Courage (London, 1945) pp. X, 10, 19-20, 26, 67.

(4) E. Linklater, Fanfare for a Tin Hat (London, 1970) p.61.

work to do: 'A gentleman's thanks', he commented sarcastically, 'for what you have done for them'.(1) This sergeant was reacting to his hierarchical superiors failing to keep their side of the deferential bargain.

While failures of paternalism and leadership might be ascribed, by charitably-minded soldiers like Coppard, to the frailties of human nature, deliberate unpleasantness on the part of officers was deeply resented. Pte. A.J. Abraham came across two officers who were regarded as petty tyrants. One, at a training unit, was nicknamed the 'Black Bastard'. He was 'a mean type and we hated his guts'. The other, Abraham's platoon officer in 8/Queen's, made a decision which long rankled with Abraham, when he refused to allow the men to wear greatcoats or groundsheets in heavy rain. This failure to improve the conditions of the men was just one of many reasons why Abraham had a low opinion of this officer. However, Abraham had a very different attitude towards others: 'Some of our officers were born leaders, men we instinctively trusted and respected'.(2)

It is rare indeed to find a blanket condemnation of officers in soldiers' memoirs, diaries or letters. A furious denunciation of one officer is likely to be followed by a complimentary reference to another. Pte. Frank Dunham of 1/7 Londons was scathing about one officer, nicknamed 'Nellie', but wrote about Capt. K.O. Peppiatt in glowing terms. Peppiatt was 'a sport', a 'fine soldier, who was not afraid to take his share in any of the risky jobs'.(3) In fact, it is uncommon to discover an officer who was actively hated by his men, as opposed to one who was criticised for neglecting his men or for thoughtlessness. One such was Northamptonshire Yeomanry officer, known as

(1) Anon, 'Mesopotamian Diary: With the 5th Buffs along the Tigris 1915-16', GW, 2, no.1, (Nov. 1989) pp.24-25; ibid, 2, No.3, (Feb. 1990) pp.65-66.

(2) Unpublished account, pp.8a, 54, 84, A.J. Abraham papers, P.191, IWM.

(3) F. Dunham, (R.H. Haig and P.W. Turner, eds.) The Long Carry (Oxford, 1970) pp.10, 31, 36, 42, 68, 82.

'the Bloody Bastard', described by one ranker as 'the most detested and hated officer I ever met in two world wars'.(1) The interesting point is not that this officer was despised, but that he suffered by comparison with the officer whom he had replaced, who had been popular with the men. Because most officers were paternal and lived up their side of the unspoken deferential bargain, officers who did not conform to the general pattern of officer-man relations were regarded with especial distaste by rankers.

Favourable references to officers can often be found in the writings of other ranks, although not as frequently as complementary references to men occur in officers' letters and diaries. In part this is a reflection of the differing perceptions of the relationship. It is also a product of the generally healthy state of officer-man relations. Only if an officer was exceptionally good, or exceptionally bad, or if a particular officer suddenly came to mind, if he was killed or wounded for instance, was he likely to be mentioned in the letters or diaries of an other rank. To take one instance, the first specific death mentioned in the diary of Pte. Joe Griffiths (1/KRRC) was that of 2/Lt. Bentall, 'who was only 18 a real good sort & was liked & respected by his men'.(2) His sense of loss prompted Pte. Griffiths to record his appreciation of this officer which otherwise would have been unknown.

Officers' privileges were resented by some, mostly middle-class, rankers. One was a private of the London Scottish who objected to the greater opportunities for leave available to officers.(3) His complaints were echoed three years later by a conscript Pay Corps private.(4) The artist Stanley Spencer, who served in the ranks of 7/R. Berks. in Macedonia, slipped an oblique

(1) Unpublished account, G.S. Chaplin papers, IWM.

(2) Diary, 3. Oct. 1915, J. Griffiths papers, IWM.

(3) Diary, 16 Feb. 1916, A. Moffat papers, LULLC.

(4) Letter, 5 Sept. 1918, H. Innes papers, LULLC.

comment into his painting of 'The Resurrection of the Soldiers' displayed in Sandham Memorial Chapel. In amongst scenes of dead soldiers rising from their graves and shaking hands with their mates is a glum-looking officer - identified by his brown boots - cleaning his own kit.(1)

These criticisms were fairly exceptional. Pte. Coppard had no doubt about the reason why most soldiers accepted the disparity in privileges without complaint: 'the Tommy accepted it as the natural order of things', although they might joke about the differences, for example by referring to 'Old Orkney' whisky as 'Officers Only'.(2) Provided that an officer behaved in a certain way, his privileges were not resented by the ordinary working-class soldier. If an officer behaved in an 'unofficerlike' way, by acting unfairly, neglecting his men or acting in a cowardly manner, in his men's eyes he forfeited his rights to his life-style.

This point is illustrated by incidents that occurred on a troop ship en route to the Dardanelles in August 1915. On two consecutive days officers were allowed ashore while the men were kept on board ship. Pte. G. Brown of the Royal Engineers made several revealing remarks in his diary. Firstly, he commented that the officers 'didn't play the game with us'. Secondly, while admitting that to send a large number of men on shore leave presented difficulties, 'the OCs should have been sports and tried some arrangement'. The use of public school sporting imagery serves to reinforce the sense of unfairness experienced by these rankers. Whether in the trenches or on board a troopship, it was generally accepted by ordinary soldiers that the officer might retire to a well-appointed dugout or cabin, but only after he had ensured that his men were fed and made as comfortable as possible. In this case the

(1) Personal observation of Sandham Memorial Chapel, Burghclere, Berkshire. The official guide leaflet misses the significance of this figure.

(2) Coppard, pp.17, 69.

officers had neglected their paternal duty and officer-man relations suffered as a result: '[There was] Bad feeling about the business and officers were booed leaving'. (1)

8.2 Beloved Captains

In 1916, a middle-class ranker wrote of a temporary officer who had joined a New Army battalion at the beginning of the war, knowing as little about military life as the men he commanded. Gradually he learned the skills of a soldier alongside his men. Little by little he learned the character of each individual soldier of his platoon. By his kindly and tactful handling of the men, he won their confidence, affection and love. The troops grew to feel that they belonged to him, and he belonged to them. His smile 'was something worth living for, and worth working for', while 'his look of displeasure and disappointment was a thing that we would do anything to avoid'. In the trenches, the men worried for his safety, and they mourned him when he was killed. In the final paragraph, the 'Beloved Captain' appears alongside Christ in heaven. (2)

The author, Donald Hankey, served in the ranks of 7/R. Bde. for a year in 1914-15. His idealised portrait of 'The Beloved Captain', which first appeared in the Spectator, reflects, in exaggerated form, the feelings of many rankers towards good officers. It would be ludicrous to claim that all rankers regarded all officers in this way, but some soldiers, working-class and middle-class alike, certainly had a very high opinion of some of their officers. Some younger soldiers hero-worshipped their officers, just as other youths idolised

(1) Diary, 10, 12 Aug. 1915, G. Brown papers, 85/11/1, IWM.

(2) D. Hankey, A Student in Arms (London, 1916) pp.59-70.

sportsmen or popular masters at school. (1) More mature men respected officers for their courage and their demeanour. Ernest Shephard, a prewar Regular NCO of 1/Dorsets, described Captain Algeo as 'a real example of the Regular "Officer and Gentleman"...Absolutely fearless and [whose] first and last thought [is] for the men'. (2) A private of 1/15 Londons wrote that his company commander

held the devotion and respect of all who served him...His officers and men were his family. He knew their foibles and most of their hopes and fears. They executed his orders explicitly and confidently.(3)

Rifleman Giles Eyre (2/KRRC) also wrote of men defending the honour of their officer against a rival platoon:

"There ain't no one in the Batt. like Mr. Walker, and you can swank as much as yer likes. Ee know's 'im and wouldn't swap 'im for nuffink."(4)

Just as the Beloved Captain's platoon thrived on his smile, it does seem that small acts of kindness and friendship on the part of officers had a disproportionate effect on rankers' morale. In a letter of July 1915 a lance corporal of 7/Norfolks, who, interestingly, was of middle- rather than working-class background, an artist in civilian life, mentioned that he had attended an early morning Communion service. His former platoon commander, a fellow scoutmaster, 'came up and spoke to me afterwards, which was very decent of him'. (5) Rather more practically, in mid-1915 an officer of 2/R. Bde. told his men who had been selected for a working party, that it was unfair for them to be called upon 'to do fatigues while we were at rest, and told us not to work too hard'.(6)

There are two points of particular interest about this incident.

(1) Coppard, p.5.

(2) Shephard, pp.82, 97.

(3) A. French, Gone For A Soldier (Kington, 1972) p.29.

(4) G.E.M. Eyre, Somme Harvest (London, 1938) p.168.

(5) Anon, George Elton Sedding, The Life and Work of an Artist Soldier (Letchworth, nd) pp.152, 154.

(6) Unpublished account, p.54, J.W. Riddell papers, 77/73/1, IWM.

Firstly, it appears in the unpublished memoirs of J.W. Riddell, who was not a sensitive middle-class artist but a hardbitten Regular NCO with prewar service. Secondly, the officer's advice was well-intentioned but if the troops had taken it, they would have been condemned to a longer spell in the trenches. The fact that Riddell bothered to record the incident in his postwar memoirs, which were extremely critical of military authority, indicates that the officer's kindness and concern for his men, and his desire to protect them against the unfair demands of the military system, were appreciated. It also illustrates the gulf in perceptions between the commissioned and non-commissioned ranks.

How common a figure was the 'Beloved Captain'? A partial answer occurs in an interesting analysis of the officer-man relationship which appeared in 1938. Its author was a former ranker, who unfortunately chose to remain anonymous. This article drew attention to the ambiguities in the officer-man relationship, most notably when he wrote that a trick of memory produced a composite figure whenever the author tried to recall his officers:

Boyish and middle-aged, cool and reckless, grave and humourous, aloof and intimate; a martinet lapsing into an indulgent father; a thwarter becoming an aider and abetter; an enemy melting into a friend.

This ex-ranker's analysis of the attributes of the good officer, interestingly enough, had many points in common with the 'official' view of military leadership discussed in an earlier chapter. He regarded the officers' battlefield role as important: '[we] despised some for their deficiencies on parade, while admiring their impeturbability under fire'. However, other attributes of the 'good' officer were perhaps less likely to be approved by the military hierarchy: 'no officer was good who had not learned when to be deaf, dumb, and blind - and when not to be'. Most officers acquired these skills, the writer asserted, on active service. They also learned to question Rudyard

Kipling's opinions of the private's 'psychology and character', which were, after all, some forty years out of date by the 1914-18 war, and also textbook views on 'the behaviour of men in the mass'. In the field, officers learned man-management, and their effectiveness in this sphere greatly influenced their men's opinion of them. The ideal officer, in the writer's view, would have been a man of all-round talent. However, paternal officers who genuinely cared about the welfare of the troops under their command would be forgiven many sins of omission and commission by the ordinary soldier. One of the writer's officers was renowned for his ineptitude on the drill square 'yet this officer was the best in the battalion for the care of his men in the trenches'.

'Looking back', the writer argued,

with a better appreciation of their difficulties than we then had,
at the officers under whom we served, we can have nothing but admiration
for almost all of them - admiration with a tinge of affection.

Officers who fell short of the ideal in some way, 'we can afford to forgive':

We do not need to be reminded that if in civil affairs we could get as square a deal and as much consideration from our superiors as we got from officers when we were in the Army, the world would be a pleasanter place to live in than some of us are finding it.

Thus the writer was suggesting that most regimental officers were effective man-managers who possessed, in some measure, the attributes and attitudes of the 'Beloved Captain'. This view lacks the sentimentality of Hankey's idealised portrait, depicting instead officers as fallible human beings. However, like Hankey's article, it expresses the rankers' admiration of brave and paternal officers, and recognises the officer's role in making life bearable for the soldier. The impact of the officer on the morale of the private perhaps only became apparent in retrospect. Back in civilian life former soldiers who were now unemployed, or who worked in dangerous or unrewarding jobs, had no

paternal subalterns to look after their interests.(1)

8.3 Relations Between Ranker-Officers and Their Men

Traditionally, Regular officers believed that working-class soldiers preferred to be commanded by gentlemen, rather than by officers of humble origin who had been promoted through the ranks.(2) How, then, were the large numbers of officers of lower-class origin who received commissions during the Great War regarded by the other ranks?

During the war, a number of public school educated officers, in addition to middle-class and working-class soldiers, continued to cling to the traditional attitude to ranker officers, partly out of sheer social snobbery. Pte. John Tucker (1/13 Londons) recalled that a subaltern was disdained by the lower ranks of this class corps because he had been a bank clerk and spoke with a 'slight cockney accent'. Interestingly, Tucker, who recognised in retrospect that this prejudice was ludicrous, had himself been a city clerk before the war.(3) A.M. Burrage, a middle-class journalist turned embittered private soldier, wrote scathingly of some officers he encountered in a London restaurant who

judging by the[ir] manners and accents...were nearly all "Smiffs", late of Little Buggington Grammar School, who had been "clurks" in civil life...(4)

In 1917 Pte. R. Cude (7/Buffs), commented that some newly-arrived officers would not have been commissioned if it was not for the manpower shortage: 'Pon my word, if this is the best that England can do, it is time she packed [up]'.

(1) Anon, 'Memories V', Twenty Years After, supp. vol, pp.369-72.

(2) Spiers, Late Victorian Army, p.103.

(3) Tucker, Johnny Get Your Gun p.41.

(4) 'Ex-Pte. X', p.216.

It is interesting that Cude, who seems to have been an artisan in civilian life, also described his platoon officer as 'a thorough Gentleman'. (1) The latter comment was made in September 1915, before his unit had taken heavy casualties and replacements for the original public school subalterns were needed.

Some commentators attempted to rationalise the dislike of other ranks for lower-class officers. G.W. Grossmith's evidence supports the traditional view of ranker-officers. He believed that rankers preferred officers to be recognisable as such by their speech and behaviour, and once heard a ranker comment that his new platoon commander was 'only one of us'. (2) Grossmith served in the ranks of 7/Beds. and was later commissioned into a Regular battalion, 2/Leicesters. Such views may have been typical of Regular units, for a Regular RSM of 1/HLI believed that humbly-born temporary officers, not being 'born and bred' to leadership, did not command the same loyalty given by the men to public school educated officers. (3)

Others offered more specific reasons why lower-class officers might be disliked. A temporary officer of 1/6 RWK believed that ranker-officers were unpopular with the men because 'they knew their job' and were aware of the various tricks and dodges employed by the ranks; in other words, they were poachers turned gamekeepers, and as gamekeepers they were rather too effective for the men's liking. (4) A working-class private of 23/RF thought that former NCOs found it necessary to assert themselves with officious behaviour. (5) Burrage held a similar view:

(1) Diary, 6 Feb. 1917, 8-16 Sept. 1915, R. Cude papers, IWM.

(2) G.W. Grossmith, KRS Q. See also the comments of a Regular officer of the Devons in A.H. Cope, KRS Q.

(3) M.W. Parr, KRS Q.

(4) Thomas, A Life Apart p.67.

(5) C. Mizen, interview.

Quite the worst type of officer was the promoted sergeant-major...Whatever rank they achieved they were still warrant-officers in spirit. They could never be anything else.(1)

An ex-Regular NCO who served as an officer in 2/Cameron's seems to fit this pattern. According to a fellow officer, writing in 1916, 'like most rankers, but not all, [he is] not too well liked by the men. He is apt to be fussy and bullying in matters of detail'. (2) This opinion is of interest not least because the writer was himself a ranker-officer, although having served in the ranks of the London Rifle Brigade, a Territorial class corps, he clearly regarded himself as being in a very different category from a former Regular NCO.

It is not surprising that attitudes such as these should be so widespread, given the degree of class consciousness in British society and the assumptions underlying the deferential/paternal relationship. Dr. Patricia M. Morris went as far as to conclude in her study of the Leeds Rifles (1/7 and 2/7 W. Yorks) that the men of these Territorial units insisted on gentlemanly officers, and would not accept officers who were not gentlemen, although this may not have been an attitude which was typical of the Territorial Force in its entirety. (3)

Other wartime soldiers thought differently. J. Gibbons, who served in the ranks of a London TF unit, believed that working-class replacements for public school officers were just as effective as their socially elite predecessors, and swiftly learned many of the same mannerisms. (4) M.L. Walkington, an ex-grammar school boy who served as a ranker in a TF class corps (16/London's) before being commissioned, believed that competent but poorly educated NCOs who received commissions generally made valuable officers. The prospect of officer

(1) 'Ex-Pte. X', p.73.

(2) [Bell,] Soldier's Diary p.170

(3) P.M. Morris, 'Leeds and the Amateur Military Tradition: The Leeds Rifles and its antecedents, 1815-1918', (Ph.D., University of Leeds, 1983) p.804.

(4) Gibbons, p.72.

status gave 'great encouragement to young NCOs who developed ambition'.(1) The usual practice was for newly-commissioned officers to be posted to units other than the one in which they had served as rankers, but some cohesive 'family' Territorial and New Army units preferred to take back their 'old boys'. (2) This practice can also be found in some Regular units throughout the war. CSM Sayers of 4/Middlesex was commissioned in the field in October 1914 and served with the battalion until his death in 1915, while Sgt. Fenner, (3/R. Bde.) was commissioned in his battalion in 1917. (3)

Commanders of units such as these presumably considered that the discipline and cohesion of their battalion or battery was strong enough to overcome any problems that might have resulted from allowing ranker officers back into their original unit, although often such men were posted to different companies. One such officer, G.H. Cole, commented that he had no problems adjusting to officer status because he 'grew up' as a ranker in his battalion, 1/20 Londons. Cole had also seen the matter from the ranker's perspective. While still a private, his company commander had been a man who had been in his form at school. 'In public, of course,' Cole wrote, 'No-one would have known that we had ever met. (4) Although there was some prejudice against ranker-officers among other ranks, it is rare indeed to find criticism of a specific officer whom a ranker had known in his previous incarnation in the ranks.

Even outside 'family' units, soldiers meeting friends who were now commissioned officers seem to have observed the spirit, if not the letter, of

(1) M.L. Walkington, KRS Q. See also F.H. Keeling's letter, 4 May 1916, in Townshend, p.281.

(2) G.S. Mitchell, "Three Cheers for the Derrys" (Derry, 1991) pp.141-2 (10/R. Innis. Fw.); Sheffield, 'Effect of War Service' p.61 (22/RF); L. Milner, Leeds Pals (Barnsley, 1991) p.51 (15/W. Yorks).

(3) Diary, 19 Oct. 1914, T.S. Wollocombe papers, RMASL; E.S. Woods, (ed.) Andrew R. Buxton, The Rifle Brigade (London, 1918) p.278.

(4) G.H. Cole, KRS Q. See also A. Rule, Students Under Arms (Aberdeen, 1934) p.77.

discipline. Other ranks sometimes talked informally with officer friends but rarely attempted to take advantage of this relationship. (1) The British army could have followed the Australian practice and allowed more ranker-officers to return to their old units (see chapter 9). Generally speaking, the self-discipline of other ranks was strong enough to ensure that military efficiency did not suffer from the commissioning of officers within a unit. It may even have enhanced it, rather as Walkington suggested, by encouraging rankers to strive for excellence, in the knowledge that they would not have to be posted away from their battalion on becoming an officer.

By the end of the war the officers of the British army were drawn from a wider social spectrum than ever before. It is possibly significant that Tucker's comments cited above refer to 1915, a time when lower-class officers were somewhat rarer than was to be the case later in the war, for if mistrust of working-class and lower middle-class officers had been as widespread as some have claimed, officer-man relations should have been poor throughout the army by 1918. Indeed, following this argument through to its logical conclusion, the British army should have disintegrated in 1917-18 because other ranks refused to follow the lower-class officers who were commissioned to replace the 'gentlemanly' officers who had been killed off. Of course, this did not happen. The bulk of evidence offered in this thesis suggests that officer-man relations remained cordial throughout the war.

Ultimately, an officer's relations with his men were determined not by his social class, or by his previous service in the ranks, but by his competence, leadership skills, paternalism, and courage. It is probably fair to say that some former Regular NCOs did not find the transistion to commissioned rank easy, and that some officers drawn from outside the traditional officer-

(1) See for, example, A. Bird, (ed.) Honour Satisfied (Swindon, 1990) p.31; R.H. Mottram, Journey to the Western Front (London, 1936) p.161.

providing strata of society had a more difficult task in establishing their credibility with their soldiers than a former public schoolboy. However, it should not be forgotten that officer training was remarkably effective in educating ranker-officers in the ethos and methods of the Regular officer class, and that from early 1916 onwards most commissions had to be earned on the battlefield. A newly-commissioned officer had to give practical demonstrations of his paternalism and leadership qualities in the trenches and on the battlefield, and this would have compensated for any lack of social standing, whatever misgivings private soldiers might originally have had about the social origins of an officer. Confirmation of this theory comes from a surprising source. That scourge of the temporary gentleman, Pte. A.M. Burrage, concluded that officers

who came from shops and offices, with little education and less tradition, did their job somehow and did it well. I hated being jiggered about (we used a slightly different phrase) by people that I considered my inferiors...but I who was a private, and a bad one at that, freely own that it was the British subaltern who won the war.(1)

8.4 Officer-Man Relations in Practice

There is a very useful phrase of Great War vintage: 'On parade, on parade; off parade, off parade', meaning 'what was permissible on certain occasions might be a military crime on others'. (2) This phrase aptly describes the relations of many officers with their men; 'regimental' on some occasions, informal on others. In the trenches, relations between officers and men were generally characterised by a greater degree of informality than was the case behind the lines. Officers and men quietly dispensed with much of the pomp and ceremony. In

(1) 'Ex-Pte. X', p.71.

(2) Brophy and Partridge, p.225. Officers also used this phrase, or a variation on it, in the context of relations between senior and junior officers. Notes for Young Officers (London, HMSO, 1917) p.2; Mosley, p.46.

one extreme example, an 18th Division private reported (in a scandalised manner) that officers and men of a 32nd Division unit were on Christian name terms. (1) The use of soldiers' nicknames by officers was probably more common. (2) Such informality was not always appreciated by higher military authorities, the lack of 'regimental' soldiering in XI Corps in 1916 leading, in the view of Corps staff, to a dangerous slackening of discipline. (3)

In the trenches, it would often be difficult for the casual observer to tell officers and men apart. A newly-commissioned ranker-officer was helped to play the part of a gentleman by his uniform, which was 'the khaki equivalent of hunting dress', very different from the 'shabby garb of the artisan' worn by the private. (4) However, in some units, officers carried rifles and packs and wore privates' uniforms, the rank badges on the sleeve replaced by unobtrusive pips on the shoulder. (5) While this adoption of rankers' dress as a protection against snipers was not universally popular, some officers arguing that it was wrong that men could not easily recognise their officers, (6) it aptly symbolised the decrease in formality in inter-rank relations that generally occurred in the line.

George Coppard, the author of one of the most perceptive ranker's memoirs to emerge from the war, somewhat cynically referred to the decreased gap between officers and men in the trenches as 'a temporary attempt at chumminess'. (7) In some units it might be the case that only in the trenches were junior officers, out of sight of their superiors, able to establish informal relations with their men. However, in other units officer-man relations achieved a degree

(1) Diary, December 1915, R. Cude papers, IWM.

(2) C. Crutchley, Shilling a Day Soldier (Bognor Regis, 1980) p.51.

(3) 'Notes on A. and Q. Conference, 29-5-16 at Headquarters XI Corps', WO 95/885, PRO.

(4) D. Winter, Death's Men (Harmondsworth, 1979 edn.) p.67.

(5) Letter, 22 Aug. 1915, W.P. Nevill papers, WPN1/34, IWM; Dunn, p.4.

(6) Letter, 9 May 1936, K. Sykes, CAB 45/137, PRO.

(7) Coppard, p.69.

of informality out of the trenches. A sergeant of 2/6 LF recalled that in June 1917 D company was like 'one great happy family. After parades discipline was relaxed and we were at liberty to spend most of our time in our own way'. There was a 'close bond' between officers and men, a 'very dear thing in the throes of war'.(1) (See also chapter 9).

Coppard was not unsympathetic to officers. He commented on the weight of responsibility that they bore for their men's lives. One mistake could kill the men of their platoon: 'The nervousness, strain and irritability of his officers could be responsible for a lot of what Tommy had to put up with'.(2) Similarly, the stress of waiting to go into battle caused one artillery officer to 'play hell' with the officers' servants.(3) Coppard also made an important point about the way in which one of the artificial barriers of rank was reduced on active service. He believed that he became less scared of officers as time went on, not because officers became 'any more friendly, but because we youngsters were growing up'.(4) In action, officers could not hide behind their status and rank. They had prove themselves as leaders, and inevitably some made mistakes and demonstrated that they were far from omnipotent. A private of 32nd Field Ambulance saw this process in operation on 7 August 1915, at Suvla Bay:

You could see the spreading dismay as the ordinary Tommies recognised their own fear and hesitation in the eyes of these one-pip striplings [second lieutenants]. Men under fire...watch each other with nerves on edge. "Blimey! even the bloody officers are lost..."(5)

Such comments suggest that Capt. T.M. Sibley was to some extent correct when

(1) Quoted in C.H. Potter and A.S.C Fothergill, The History of the 2/6th Lancashire Fusiliers (Rochdale, 1927) p.49.

(2) Coppard, p.69.

(3) Campbell, Cannon's Mouth pp.59, 65.

(4) Coppard, p.69.

(5) J. Hargrave, The Suvla Bay Landing (London, 1964) p.116.

he wrote in June 1916 the gulf between officers and men was 'a very important part of the British Army system' and soldiers would lose their respect for some officers if they came to know them. This remark gives a salutary reminder of the difficulties of generalising about inter-rank relations in an organisation as big as the BEF. (1)

In the words of a subaltern of 2/KOYLI, 'the horizon of the Infantryman in the Great War was small, but his philosophy was straightfoward'; the war had to be fought, and if mail, food and cigarettes were available, the war was going well.(2) One private was not untypical in regarding himself as belonging firstly to his platoon, then to his company, and then to his battalion.(3) For the most part, higher formations meant little to the private, although some divisions such as 18th (Eastern), 51st (Highland) and 56th (London), did acquire a measure of divisional esprit de corps. Junior officers and rankers alike shared this narrowness of vision. (4) In this tiny, insular world, it is not surprising that men turned in on each other for affection, or that minor acts of benevolence were greatly appreciated. Many officers regarded it as part of their duties to write letters of condolence to the families of soldiers who had been killed or wounded while serving under their command. While this could be interpreted as just another aspect of military paternalism, there are also many examples of NCOs and privates writing to the families of their officers. It was not uncommon for soldiers on leave to visit the families of their officers, or officers the families of soldiers. (5)

(1) Letter, June 1916, T.M. Sibley papers, DS/Misc/44, IWM.

(2) Letter, nd c. 1963, K.J. Box, BBC/GW, IWM.

(3) Unpublished account, R.D. Fisher papers, 76/54/1, IWM.

(4) Crozier, Impressions and Recollections p.25.

(5) For a good selection of such letters, see M. Brown, Tommy Goes to War (London, 1978), pp.199-200; Brown, Imperial War Museum p.234.

Apart from demonstrating the affection and comradeship felt by men for their officers, and vice versa, such letters also helped to relieve one of the principal factors that undermined the morale of fighting men: worry about their families. The soldier could face death knowing that their loved ones would receive some comfort, however small. Letters of sympathy from ordinary rankers were perhaps especially comforting to officers' families, because they gave evidence of the effectiveness of their military leadership, of a duty performed unto death, of a sacrifice nobly given. In many cases, it took a real effort for ill-educated privates to write a formal letter of this sort. This obviously did not apply to Pte. S. Brashier of 22/RF who wrote to the family of the late Capt. G.D.A. Black:

To us he was life itself, and the confidence we placed in him was great. Really we used to say -"He knew no fear" and so though we greatly miss him we realise what a sorrow and grief it (sic) has come to you, and so our thoughts go out to you in your great sorrow.

This letter was copied and circulated among Black's family. It obviously did provide some comfort, since it has been treasured in the family down to the present day.(1)

Some point of mutual interest, such as common regional loyalties or language, helped to break down barriers between the ranks. Edmund Blunden actually found it easier to get on with his soldiers, fellow Sussexmen, than with some of his brother officers.(2) Welsh-speaking officers and men of 15/RWF talked freely together; English was regarded as 'the language of the Army, Welsh the language of friendship and companionship' and the use of Welsh formed 'a bond of unity, that sense of being an enclave within a community'. (3)

Close relationships could develop between officers and men when a soldier

(1) Letter, 24 June 1916, S. Brashier. I am grateful to Mr. N. Lucas for sending me a copy of this letter.

(2) B. Webb, Edmund Blunden: A Biography (New Haven, 1990) pp.52-53.

(3) L.W. Griffith, 'The Pattern of One Man's Remembering', in Panachias, p.287.

emerged from the khaki mass. NCOs would sometimes find themselves alone with officers, and mutual respect could blossom into greater intimacy. This happened in, of all units, the South Persia Rifles, where a middle-class officer (formerly a ranker in the 7/RDF) was thrown into the company of a British sergeant.(1) Similarly, Anthony Eden (21/KRRC) wrote movingly of nights spent on watch in Plugstreet Wood, when he would hold long discussions with a platoon sergeant, Norman Carmichael, whom Eden counted as a friend. (2) (See below for a further discussion of officer-NCO relations).

In apparent contradiction of the dictum that no man is a hero to his valet, soldier servants and officers could become friendly within the bounds imposed by rank and class. A public school officer of 1/N. Staffs. summed up his relationship with Tidmarsh, his working-class 'old-soldier' batman, in these words:

We were not exactly friends because of the differences in social class, but accepting these differences we were not separated by them. Each regarded the other as a personality to be respected.(3)

Soldier servants had a unique opportunity to get to know their officers, 'warts and all'. A prewar soldier servant's duties commenced each morning at 06.00, when he had to take a glass of whisky to his officer's bedroom, followed by two boiled eggs and more whisky. (4) Soldiers had good reason to be friendly to their officers. As a private of ^{the} Worcesterhire Yeomanry pointed out, being an officer's servant 'is much better than being in the troops' since he received many luxuries and was excused night guards. (5) It is certainly

(1) Letter of 6 Apr. 1918, T. Sherwood papers, IWM.

(2) A. Eden, Another World (London, 1976) pp.80-81.

(3) Martin, pp.156-57.

(4) Unpublished memoir, p.8, W.H. Davies papers, 8201-13, NAM.

(5) Letter, Mar. 1915, C.H. Rastall papers, IWM; see also letters of 17 and 21 Apr. 1916.

true that many servants had a privileged position. These privileges might take the form of physical comforts - a company commander of 2/21 Londons shared a tent and pooled rations with his servant while on campaign in Palestine (1) - but there were also more subtle benefits to being an officers' servant. This is indicated by the obvious delight of a mess cook who summoned other servants to watch the spectacle of a newly-arrived subaltern making a fool of himself.(2) This incident, in which the officer had to be disentangled from coils of wire by the grinning cook, also indicates that soldier servants were allowed a certain amount of licence, an aspect of the relationship which is beautifully captured by some of the comic scenes in Sherriff's play Journey's End. (3)

An unfriendly or surly servant, let alone an incompetent one, ran the risk of being returned to normal duty and forfeiting their privileged existence, so it was in their own interests to be pleasant. However, some genuine friendships developed between officers and servants. An officer of 11/Cheshires 'witnessed a most touching farewell' between the battalion commander and his old servant : they embraced 'and both shed tears'. (4) Pte. Harry Adams (6/Queen's) developed a 'real attachment' to his officer, Mr. Jefferies, and experienced 'great grief' when he heard of his death in 1918.(5) Capt. V.F. Eberle (48th Division RE) commented that 'the relationship between a good batman and his officer is often no mean criterion of the latter'.(6)

Other rankers who emerged from the anonymity of the ranks also enjoyed more than usually intimate relations with officers. Pte. Clarkson, a runner for a company commander in 5/6 R. Scots, wrote that mutual respect was high and that he learned to trust his officer. In a common act of friendship, the officer would

(1) Caldicott, pp.45, 176.

(2) Vaughan, pp.17-18.

(3) Sherriff, Journey's End pp.8-9, 16-17.

(4) Letter, 7 July 1930, C.F. Hill, CAB 45/134, PRO.

(5) Unpublished account, p.12, H.L. Adams papers, 83/50/1, IWM.

(6) Eberle, p.149.

often give Clarkson extra rum on cold nights.(1) Another soldier with a semi-independent existence was Sgt. Jones, 'of Jones's water dump', on Gallipoli. Officers and men alike would congregate in Jones's dugout to hear the latest rumours. Maj. John Gillam (29th Division ASC) noted that 'We do not look upon him as a soldier or an N.C.O....Personally, I feel that my relations with him are as they would be to the landlord of a familiar roadside inn'. (2) All of these examples indicate the type of informal, friendly relations which could develop between officers and men when circumstances allowed individuals to get to know each other as men.

However, it is clear that for the most part, circumstances did not allow rankers and officers to develop this sort of relationship. The restraining hand of the NCO was one of the factors why inter-rank relations did not often develop from friendliness into real intimacy. This is well illustrated by a scene in an autobiographical novel by a ranker-officer, where a newly-arrived subaltern briefs his men and then asks them if they have any questions. This was clearly regarded as unusual, and to 'continue the feeling of semi-intimacy with the officer' a private took advantage of the invitation and actually asked a question. On receiving a polite and informative answer the private was emboldened to ask others. However, the private was well aware of the disapproval of his sergeant, who suspected insolence, although none was intended. The moral of this episode was even if the private and the subaltern were prepared to establish an informal relationship, the NCO, who in many ways had the greater influence over the life of the private, was capable of being less broad-minded. (3)

(1) Clarkson, p.13.

(2) J. Gillam, Gallipoli Diary (Stevenage, 1989 edn.) p.283.

(3) H. Williamson, A Fox Under My Cloak (London, 1985 edn.) pp.35-6.

8.5 Officer-NCO Relations

The relationship between the Non-Commissioned Officer and the officer deserves special consideration. The NCO played a crucial role in the maintenance of discipline, and the administration and management of military units. During the Great War, as before and since, NCOs were the 'backbone' of the British army. They formed the crucial link between the officer and the ranker, passing orders down the chain of command and performing, as a contemporary commentator noted, the 'grave and all-important task of enforcing that prompt obedience to orders that is the life's blood of an army'. (1) As noted above, the NCO, rather than the officer, was often the figure of authority who had the greatest impact on the life of the ordinary soldier, (2) although it is fair to say officers and men came into contact more frequently on active service than in peacetime. NCOs varied greatly in status. They included the lance corporal, 'one who has position, but no magnitude'(3), an appointment which was only one step up from a private and was often held in an acting and unpaid capacity. For our purposes it also included the senior non-commissioned rank in a unit, the regimental sergeant major (RSM), who was technically a warrant officer (WO). The RSM, in contrast to the unfortunate 'lance jack', was a powerful and often respected figure. The British NCO of 1914-18 is worthy of a major study but here there is only space to reflect on those aspects of the NCOs' role that directly affected officer-man relations.

Two varieties of NCO need to be distinguished. Firstly, there were the Regular NCOs encountered by all soldiers at training establishments throughout

(1) Baynes, p.171; O'Toole, pp.148-9.

(2) For one such NCO, Sgt. Ross of 32nd Division TMB, see Artillery and Trench Mortar Memories p.677.

(3) N. Hancock, 'War from the Ranks', in O'Riordan et al p.183.

the war, some of whom were the 'old soldier' types immortalised by C.E. Montague: men who preferred drinking to training, who were open to bribes, and who stole army property.(1) Many were older men, reservists who were medically unfit for active service. Secondly, there were NCOs appointed from the ranks of wartime volunteers and conscripts. In the earlier part of the war, some difficulty was experienced with such NCOs, as attempts to enforce the separation from the rank and file deemed necessary by the army were not always successful in New Army and Territorial units.(2)

NCOs had reached positions of responsibility because they were deemed by the army to be more intelligent than privates and to have the ability to administer, and indeed accept, discipline (3) although the degree of trust reposed in NCOs varied from unit to unit, depending on the personality of the commanding officer. (4) A former farm labourer, serving as a junior NCO in a trench mortar battery, summed the relationship between NCOs and men in these words:

it dose (sic) not do for us [the NCOs] to sleep with them [the men] for we are like Masters on a farm and the men under us you see how the thing works. (5)

Like civilian foreman, NCOs were needed to ensure smooth running of a unit, to 'keep a finger on the pulse' of a complex organisation. Thus the word of a NCO was usually taken at face value, even if it conflicted with that of a private. Reinforcement of the NCO's authority was seen as being of greater importance than the strict administration of justice, and NCOs sometimes imposed

(1) C.E. Montague, Disenchantment (London, 1928 edn.) pp.16-20, 24-25.

(2) Simkins, Kitchener's Army p.228; Middlebrook, First Day on the Somme p.18.

(3) Jobson, pp.177-78; Baynes, p.197. See also Andrews, Haunting Years pp.74-75.

(4) H. Dalton, With the British Guns in Italy (London, 1919) p.70.

(5) Letter, 26 Jan. 1917, O. Hopkin, quoted in A.J. Peacock, 'A Rendezvous with Death', Gunfire No.5 (1986) p.368.

punishments which were illegal but nonetheless tacitly condoned by officers.(1) Thus it was vital that NCOs could be trusted by their officers. Capt. Hamond, in a typically forthright sentence, wrote that an NCO who was a liar or who manufactured evidence 'must be destroyed at once'.(2)

The NCOs' duties were not simply concerned with discipline. They had a vital role in training, both on active service and at home. One gunner commented that he did not come into contact with a single officer during his training in England, for NCOs carried out all the work. (3) C.S. Lewis, an officer of 3/SLI, a Special Reserve unit based in England, wrote in October 1917 that all the training was carried out by NCOs; 'All you do is to lead your party onto parade, hand them over to their instructor, and then walk about doing nothing at all'.(4) On active service, a whole host of other duties came the way of the NCO, including ensuring a fair division of food when in the line, and also responsibility for kit, arms and equipment.(5) Less formal duties included protecting soldiers against higher authority, and inculcating regimental traditions.(6) On the battlefield, NCOs had to lead men, to take over from officers as platoon commanders if the latter were killed or wounded, and promote and sustain morale.(7) It is not surprising that one ex-ranker wrote 'Platoon sergeants - what would the War have been without them? Why, they ran the thing! At least, that was the impression we received'. (8)

The NCO's role therefore overlapped with that of the officer. In some ways,

(1) Baynes, p.190, 193.

(2) Wisdom for Warts p.6, D. Hamond papers.

(3) Unpublished memoir, p.30, P. Creek papers, 87/31/1, IWM.

(4) Hooper, Letters p.67.

(5) For a list of platoon sergeant's duties, see B.C. Lake, Knowledge for War - Every Officer's Handbook For The Front (London, nd) p.149; for a description of the duties of a CSM, see Shephard, p.125.

(6) Marks, p.110; Shephard, p.126.

(7) Riddell, p.50; R. Whipp, interview.

(8) Anon, 'Memories V', Twenty Years After, supp. vol., p.374.

NCOs were better placed to lead men than were their officers. Although the military hierarchy imposed 'distance' between the private and the NCO, it was not always as great as that between privates and officers. Junior NCOs, for instance, often shared many of the living conditions of other ranks, and some NCOs operated the principle of 'on parade, on parade; off parade, off parade' with their men.(1) NCOs were also in a position to do things that were beneath an officer's dignity, such as physically lay hands upon them. Most importantly of all, since NCOs were usually appointed from within the unit, they were in a position to gain more detailed knowledge of the men than even the most paternal and informal officer could ever hope to obtain. In 1917, RQMS Young of 2/17 Londons reflected on his methods of command: 'By a word, I can hold them in check, when they get unruly, because I know them and their East End spirit'. (2)

Given the wide range of types and functions of NCOs, it is difficult to generalise about the state of relations between NCOs and privates. Driver R.L. Venables, for instance, served under two very different battery sergeant majors. The BSM in his battery of 31st Division artillery was a foul-mouthed 'nasty piece of work' from 'the metropolis gutter', while the BSM in his previous battery, in 32nd Division, was 'first-class'. He never used foul language on parade but Venables believed that the discipline in his former unit was superior.(3) Broadly speaking, the relationship between privates and NCOs within the unit was more often than not characterised by respect. Clearly, this is a subject which deserves further research.

It can be seen that many of the NCOs' duties, responsibilities and experiences were paralleled by those of officers:

(1) Kingsmill, pp.75-76; Sheffield, 'Effect of War Service', pp.46-47.

(2) Letter, 5 May 1917, A. Young papers, 76/101/1, IWM.

(3) Unpublished account, pp.94-95, R.L. Venables papers, IWM.

...I am learning how to mix discipline with persuasion...I have got to know the roughs in our platoon pretty well...You never get to the stage of really trusting them, but you can establish working relationships with them by expedients which seem almost childish, silly jokes and a kind of assumed (for me) music-hall, pub-loafing heartiness. It's acting, of course, but I come to feel more and more that all leadership is in a way acting, conscious or unconscious.(1)

This passage could easily have been written by a subaltern but it was in fact penned by a Wykehamist NCO of 6/DCLI. The experiences of Sgt. C.F. Jones of 2/15 Londons also have many points of comparison with those of officers. In his time he defended a new draft of boys, 'as a lioness its whelps' against what he perceived to be the unfair demands of a higher authority, in this case, the orderly sergeant. The good NCO, Jones believed, could play a vital role in 'getting the best out of his men' by seeing that rations were fairly distributed. (2) Clearly, the good NCO, like the good officer, was a paternalist. An officer of 1/RWF wrote that the acid test of 'good' and 'useless' NCOs was their behaviour during a 'working party in the rain'. The useless NCO would take shelter. The good NCO would help the men with their tasks.(3)

In practice, NCOs could become the junior partners of regimental officers in running a platoon, company or battalion. Frederic Manning's fictional RSM concisely expressed the importance of the relationship between the officer and the NCO:

...[W]hen you're an officer you won't know your men. You'll be lucky if you know your NCOs, and you'll have to leave a lot of it to them. You'll have to keep them up to the mark; but you'll have to trust them, and let them know it.(4)

(1) Letter, 15 Nov. 1914, F.H. Keeling, in Townshend, p.199.

(2) Unpublished account, pp. 86-7, 302, 348, C.F. Jones papers, LHCMH.

(3) Adams, Nothing of Importance p.62.

(4) Manning, p.237.

The fact that in the latter part of the war many officers had served as NCOs undoubtedly aided the building of good working relationships. Sgt. R.H. Tawney (22/Manchesters), writing of the moments just before going into action on the Somme in 1916, noted that his platoon officer 'had enough sense not to come fussing around'; sense gained, it is implied, as a result of his previous experience as an NCO. (1)

Wyn Griffith, a company commander in 15/RWF, left an excellent pen-portrait of his relationship with his company sergeant major. Relaxing together over a glass of whisky and a pipe in the company officers' mess, they would gossip about the men of the company. Griffith made two revealing remarks about this relationship. Firstly, 'Our life thrust us close together; his [the CSM's] position was in its way as solitary as my own'. Both had responsibility for their men. Both needed to strike a delicate balance between being part of the company 'team' and being slightly aloof from it. Secondly, the gossip allowed Griffith to find out incidents in the life of the company 'unknown to the least unapproachable of company commanders, unguessed at in spite of the close contact of life in the trenches'. For example, 'Had I heard what Delivett said when a pip-squeak blew some mud in his mess tin...?' In short, the CSM provided an important link between the private and the company commander. In this case, and many others, the NCO and officer worked together as a harmonious team.(2) Similar relationships could exist between other grades of NCO and officer, but in all cases, they had to be founded upon mutual goodwill and carefully nurtured.

It is instructive to compare Griffiths' relationship with his CSM with the

(1) R.H. Tawney, The Attack and Other Papers (Nottingham, 1981 edn.) p.12.

(2) Griffith, Up to Mametz pp.135-6.

comments of Sgt. S.F. Hatton (Middlesex Yeomanry) concerning an officer who tried to

court popularity by being over-friendly with the sergeants, and coming into the sergeants' mess to stand drinks...In fact, you have to be just the right type of officer to ever receive an invitation into the sergeants' mess, to be able to drink with them, and preserve their loyalty and your own dignity.

This passage neatly encapsulates the problem that faced officers who wished to demonstrate respect and friendship for their NCOs. Hatton used an analogy that would have been readily appreciated by his male readers. A 'sergeant no more wants a young and inexperienced officer in the mess', he wrote, 'than a man really wants a woman in a public-house'. Hatton's subaltern breached some of the important ground rules that were recognised by officers and NCOs alike as essential for the maintenance of discipline. Apart from anything else, the standing of drinks could be interpreted as an attempt to buy loyalty. In addition, the good officer understood that the NCOs were entitled to privacy in their mess, their home. No matter how friendly an officer might be, it was impossible for a subordinate to be completely relaxed in a superior's company. While an experienced officer would know enough not to abuse the privilege of admission to the sergeants' mess, to talk to the sergeants in an appropriate way and to make a tactful withdrawal, this inexperienced officer clearly out-stayed his welcome on a number of occasions. The fact that the Middlesex Yeomanry contained a large number of middle-class men, and enjoyed very informal relations with their officers, makes Hatton's insistence on the rights of the NCO all the more striking.(1)

More generally, it may be suggested that for the most part privates and NCOs did not want their officers to be too friendly, but rather preferred them to maintain a certain social distance, to avoid role ambiguity. Even before a man left his unit to go for officer training, a subtle change came over his

(1) S.F. Hatton, The Yarn of a Yeoman (London, nd) pp.87-88.

relations with his comrades, impending promotion 'already dividing him from them'.(1) It is in fact very rare to come across an officer misguided enough to endanger his authority by becoming over-familiar with his soldiers. One suspects that service in the ranks and training at an OCB gave most subalterns a firm grasp of the correct way to treat their men.

Many officers relied heavily on their NCOs. This was especially true of young subalterns, fresh out from England, with no previous war experience. The steady experienced NCO supporting the 'green' subaltern with a whispered word of advice is almost a commonplace. In late 1915 one gunner officer wrote that subalterns fresh from the 'Shop' [Woolwich] 'know very little about the interior economy of their batteries. They step into their machine and glide along with a first class BSM and QMS behind them'.(2) The Guards sergeant-major of 60 Squadron RFC instructed newly-promoted nineteen-year-old captains in their disciplinary duties 'without in the smallest particular transgressing that code of military etiquette which regulates so strictly the relations between commissioned and warrant officers'. (3) This WO not only gave sound advice to young officers but also provided valuable continuity between the new mass army and the old Regular force.

For the sake of discipline, it was important that the position of the NCO should not be undermined. In 1915, Sgt. T. Boyce (1/10 Londons) was rudely treated by his CO in front of his men. It is significant that this incident still rankled with Boyce fifty years later.(4) In fact most senior officers were well aware of the importance of the NCO in the smooth running of a unit. If a subaltern was to undermine the position of an NCO, for instance by swearing at him or rebuking him in front of his men, a senior officer was likely to take

(1) Aldington, p.338. See also Manning, p.132.

(2) Fraser-Tytler, p.21. For an example from the infantry, see Martin, p.50.

(3) A.J.L. Scott, Sixty Squadron R.A.F. 1916-1919 (London, 1990 edn.) p.4.

(4) Letter, 16 July 1963, T. Boyce, BBC/GW, IWM.

the part of the NCO.(1) Experienced NCOs were invaluable, while subalterns were all too easy to replace. The chastening experience of one young Territorial gunner officer underlines the relative importance of the newly-arrived subaltern and the battle-hardened NCO. On one occasion in 1917, a working party was unloading wagons under shellfire. Lt. P.J. Campbell called to Sgt. Denmark to come over to him. Denmark flatly disobeyed, demanding, with a 'face of thunder', 'Who's taking charge here, are you Sir, or am I?'. Campbell was left feeling humiliated and crushed. Denmark's appreciation of the situation was correct, as Campbell apparently recognised in retrospect; the NCO was carrying out a dangerous task that needed to be completed as swiftly as possible without interruption. Campbell did not even contemplate making a disciplinary issue of Denmark's insubordination, fearing that even to confide in a fellow officer would only result in Campbell looking even more foolish. Instead, Campbell worked to try to win his sergeant's respect. (2)

A case could be made that the NCO corps was damaged by the wholesale commissioning of corporals and sergeants who showed leadership ability. One temporary officer believed that the commissioning of warrant officers was a mistake, because an RSM enjoyed much greater prestige than a mere subaltern.

(3) A number of Regular NCOs had poor opinions of their New Army and Territorial counterparts.(4) One officer's belief that most NCOs were ineffective under shellfire and the exceptions 'ought to be officers', while no doubt a broad generalisation, is indicative of the general belief that the place for those soldiers with leadership qualities was in the officers', not the sergeants',

(1) Notes for Young Officers p.6; H. Gordon, The Unreturning Army (London, 1967) pp.60-61.

(2) Campbell, Cannon's Mouth pp.70-71.

(3) F. Moor, KRS Q.

(4) See for instance Shephard, pp.68-69. See Simpson, 'The Officers' p.83 for some points which could be used to construct a contrary argument.

mess. (1) There is ample testimony in the writings of officers that many NCOs were held in high regard, as men, as leaders, and as partners in the administration and management of military units. A particularly clear statement comes in the diary of an officer of 11/Argylls. After taking part in some heavy fighting near Ypres in August 1917, Lt. R.L. Mackay described Sgt. McQuarrie as one of the bravest and best gentlemen I have ever met. He has been utterly invaluable to me on this job...I have more respect for this man than for any other dozen I have ever met. (2)

The language Mackay used is revealing. McQuarrie was a courageous 'gentleman' - perhaps not by birth, but certainly by behaviour - who had earned Mackay's respect. In short, he fulfilled most of the criteria demanded by other ranks of their officers. McQuarrie had, one might say, 'leadership qualities'. Similarly, the picture that emerges from the diaries of CSM Ernest Shephard, a prewar Regular soldier of 1/Dorsets, is of a man who 'nursed' inexperienced officers, who acted as a rock of stability and continuity after the battalion had taken heavy casualties, and who admired, and had good relations with, various officers.(3) One of the major factors in maintaining the cohesion of the British army through the long years of attrition was the presence of Regular, Territorial and New Army NCOs like Shephard, Denmark and McQuarrie.

8.6 A 'War Generation'?

During the war years, there was much talk among civilians about the positive effects of war service on social cohesion.(4) In 1916 the Bishop of London

(1) Devonald-Lewis, p.69.

(2) Diary, p.33, 2 Aug. 1917, R.L. Mackay papers, P.374, IWM.

(3) Shephard, passim.

(4) See for example B. Clarke, 'From "Cog" to Partnership', The War Illustrated 21 Dec. 1918 p.311.

spoke of a 'brotherhood' being 'forged of blood and iron' in the trenches, which should be maintained into peacetime, thus ending the class war between 'Hoxton' and 'Belgravia'. (1) Subsequently historians have pointed to the growth of solidarity among front-line soldiers of all nations as a reaction to the politicians, capitalists and shirking or striking workers on the home front, and as I have argued above, generals and staff officers.(2)

Is it then possible to talk about the existence of Grabenkameradschaft, a comradeship of the trenches, which united British frontline soldiers, regardless of rank, into a common fraternity? Many officers believed that one could. 'Through all their ordeals and sufferings', wrote a Victoria Cross winner, long after the war, 'they knew they had become a brotherhood of all ranks...' (3) The padre of 12/HLI argued, from personal experience, that men who had fought in battle had 'proved our manhood to ourselves and to one another', the bond of a shared experience of battle being 'finer and more intimate than could be forged by any other association...we shall for ever have in common a host of dearly-bought memories, sacred and incommunicable'. (4) I have argued elsewhere that war experience did make an impact on 'officer-class' perceptions of the working classes, a phenomenon which had considerable repercussions for postwar British society and politics.(5) But how far, if at all, did other ranks regard

(1) The Times, 23 Oct. 1916. For the sceptical reaction of an officer to a similar speech by the Archbishop of York, see letter, 28 July 1917, in Neville, p.50.

(2) M. Ferro, The Great War 1914-1918 (London, 1973) p.145; B. Bond, War and Society in Europe, 1870-1970 (London, 1984) p.120; M. Howard, introduction to Manning, p.vi.

(3) G.H. Woolley, Sometimes A Soldier (London, 1963) p.54.

(4) Steuart, p.69.

(5) G.D. Sheffield, 'The Effect of The Great War on Class Relations in Britain: The Career of Major Christopher Stone DSO MC', War and Society, 7, No.1 (1989) pp.87-105.

themselves as sharing a common war experience with their officers, an experience which transcended rank?

At one level, men of whatever rank who had undergone the experience of battle shared in an experience denied to the majority of the population. One of the clearest statements of this simple truth came from Sgt. R.H. Tawney (22/Manchesters), who wrote of the 'cleavage between the civilians who remain civilians and the civilians who become soldiers'.(1) The working-class private who wrote to Edmund Blunden after the war to say that Blunden's book Undertones of War had put his war experience into words was also testifying that, even if the officer and the private had nothing else in common, they shared the experience of battle, which set them aside from most of their fellow human beings.(2) Shared experience of battle had the ability to dissolve the formal bounds of rank, at least temporarily. Capt. E.G.D. Living (2/19 Londons) wrote of returning from an action in Palestine. A ranker marched beside him:

and, officer and man, we opened our hearts to one another as every one else in the stumbling fours in front of us was doing, and as only those can who have been through terrible experiences together.(3)

Studies on other twentieth century armies drawn from western industrialised societies suggest that the small cohesive group, offering mutual support and affection, is of vital importance in sustaining morale in war.(4) A private's view that the 'set of mucking-in pals' was 'the true social unit of the army' of the 1914-1918 war would tend to reinforce this view. (5) Some very deep

(1) Tawney, p.22.

(2) Webb, p.94.

(3) E.G.D. Living, 'Cut Off in a Cave', in J. Buchan, (ed.) The Long Road To Victory (London, 1920) p.225.

(4) See R.W. Little, 'Buddy Relations and Combat Performance' in Janowitz, pp.195-223; E.A. Shills and M. Janowitz, 'Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht' in D. Lerner, (ed.) Propaganda in War and Crisis (New York, 1972) pp.367-415. O. Bartov, Hitler's Army (New York, 1991) challenges, somewhat unconvincingly, the role of the primary group in the Wehrmacht's unit cohesion.

(5) Brophy and Partridge, p.151. See also letter, 21 Mar. 1917, Pte. B.F. Eccles papers, 82/22/1, IWM.

relationships were forged between soldiers during the First World War, especially on active service. The common view that, in war, life and human relationships were especially vivid was held by a very ordinary private of 2/4 Londons, Jack Mudd, who wrote to his wife of the importance of comradeship in the trenches:

Out here, dear, we're all pals, what one hasn't got the other has, we try to share each others troubles get each other out of danger you wouldnt believe the Humanity between men out here...Its a lovely thing is friendship out here.(1)

There is much evidence from the writings of Great War soldiers that comradeship was indeed of vital importance in maintaining morale.(2) Conversely, men who were excluded from primary groups generally had a miserable time, and was in some cases an important factor in the disillusionment of specific individuals (who, pace popular opinion, were not typical of the majority of officers and men).(3)

Primary groups could transcend social class, for although some middle-class rankers could be rather uncomfortable serving alongside working-class soldiers, (4) others happily 'mucked-in' with their proletarian comrades. An artist serving in the ranks of 8/R. Bde. noted that:

I have gained a knowledge of the "workers" point of view, opinions and workings of his mind, that would be invaluable if I were going to do anything in the political or sociological line! (5)

In his diary, a middle-class conscript infantryman referred to 'The splendid qualities of the men with whom one is associated'. Later he wrote:

(1) Letter, 22 Oct. 1917, J. Mudd papers, 82/3/1. IWM.

(2) See for instance, unpublished story, p.33, E. Partridge papers, LULLC; unpublished account, p.88, R.D. Fisher papers, 76/54/1, IWM; P.G. Ackrell, My Life in the Machine Gun Corps (Ilfracombe, 1966) p.14.

(3) Steuart, pp.97-98; 'Ex-Pte. X', passim. For a critical analysis of the concept of disillusionment, see G.D. Sheffield, '"Disillusionment" and Other Myths of British Army Morale in the First World War', paper given to BCMH conference, University of Buckingham, July 1992.

(4) P. MacGill, The Red Horizon (London, 1984 edn.) p.94; E. Linklater, The Man on My Back (London, 1950) p.36.

(5) Letter, 11 Feb. 1918, H.S. Williamson papers, PP/MCR/3, IWM.

It is very educative to mix among these men, whose ideas and characters are as diverse - sometimes as grotesque - as the burrs or drawls of their speech...They are all very nice to me...(1)

These quotations sit neatly alongside similar ones from socially privileged officers such as Alec Waugh (MGC), who wrote in the 1960s that

for many young soldiers, certainly for me, there came a newly awakened social consciousness...The young officer began to feel differently about the men he led in action. (2)

Other officers who were later prominent in public life, men such as Anthony Eden, Harold Macmillan, John Boyd Orr, and Christopher Stone, also acquired and maintained a life-long affection, respect and sense of responsibility for the working classes through their war service. (3)

Could this process be taken a stage further? Could officers, as well as middle-class other ranks, form a comradeship group with working-class soldiers? Rank and discipline placed considerable barriers in the way of uninhibited friendship between leaders and led, but some individuals came close to breaking these down. R.C. Foot, a temporary gunner officer of D/310 Battery (62nd Division), claimed that

Officers shared the same food and slept in the same ditches as their soldiers; about the only thing they [the other ranks] could not share was their responsibility, and the soldiers recognised this.

It is possible that Foot exaggerated the closeness of inter-rank relationships in his unit, but he certainly seems to have formed a bond of mutual friendship and trust with an NCO. Long after the war Foot was visited by the daughter of his old sergeant. This lady had a personal problem, and she had been told that she could refer to Foot in time of trouble, but as Foot wrote,

(1) Undated extract from diary, quoted in Grey, Confessions of a Private pp.35, 72.

(2) A. Waugh, 'A Light Rain Falling', in Panachias, pp.342-43.

(3) Sheffield, 'Class Relations' passim.

that incident, some twenty-five years later than her father's service and friendship with me, rather took my breath away at the time.

Foot went on to argue that 'such friendships, based on mutual individual respect' and the comradeship engendered by a male society made it possible to endure the horrors of war.(1)

A similiar incident occurred in 1969, when W.M. Jenner, a former ranker, wrote to the family of Capt. Peter Blagrove, after seeing his old officer's obituary in a newspaper. Jenner wrote that 'To me he was a friend as well as a superior officer', and said that all of the men of his trench mortar battery were proud of Blagrove, who was regarded as 'a real gentleman and a very brave man'. One of the things which endeared him to Jenner was that, when short of men in June 1916, the officer had helped the men to move ammunition 'in the gun pit of a 4.5 Howitzer Bty (sic)'. In the eyes of his subordinates, Blagrove displayed the traits of a 'Beloved Captain', being gentlemanly, courageous, and paternal. Blagrove and Jenner last met in December 1918. The implications of this fact are addressed below, when the nature of the postwar British war generation is considered. However, here it will suffice to point out that for a ranker to treasure the memory of an officer for over fifty years is evidence that Grabenkameradschaft existed in this particular case. (2)

Perhaps Maurice Bowra, who served as a temporary gunner subaltern, captured the essence of many relationships between officers and soldiers when he wrote that his dealings with his men 'were more formal but in the end hardly less intimate' than his relations with his brother officers. The men looked after one another, and Bowra, with 'protective care' and

(1) Unpublished account, pp.121-25, R.C. Foot papers, IWM.

(2) Letter, 24 June 1969, W.M. Jenner, P. Blagrove papers, LHCMA.

in moments of danger or excitement or even of frustrating tedium they would relax their restraints and tell me about their families and their jobs in time of peace. (1)

The fact that junior officers and rankers shared much the same dangers in battle was important. As has been demonstrated above, one of the criteria by which rankers assessed their officers was by their performance under fire. Charles Crutchley, who served in the ranks of 135th MG Coy in Mesopotamia, captured the way in which shared danger could forge men into a community, if only temporarily, regardless of rank:

Thousands of rounds of empty ammunition cases were strewn around a deserted machine-gun emplacement. "Nasty bit of goods" said our officer..."I wonder how many they got with that little lot".

The look on his face made me wonder if he were (sic) also thinking of our own 'nasty bit of goods'...We squatted around: a mere handful of us, on a lonely ridge in the desert...Dreamy said it was his twenty-first birthday, and my officer fished out a flask [of whisky] from his haversack.

"Pass it around, sergeant," he said... That drink, taken from the same flask, cemented our comradeship.(2)

The evidence presented in this thesis indicates that at least some officers were regarded by some men as comrades; even if rank and the disciplinary structure prevented the uninhibited friendship possible between two privates. Without a host of case studies of individual units and individual soldiers, it is impossible to state categorically how widespread this sense of inter-rank comradeship was. A clue is offered, however, by the resolutions passed by the 'Soldier's and Worker's Council, Home Counties and Training Reserve Branch' held at Tunbridge Wells on 24 June 1917. These resolutions were for the most part closely akin to trade union demands, calling for an increase in separation allowances, relaxation of the Defence of the Realm Act, and so on. However, two of the resolutions read:

(1) C.M. Bowra, Memories 1898-1939 (London, 1966) pp.89-91.

(2) Crutchley, Shilling a Day Soldier pp.73-4.

5. That the general treatment of soldiers be brought into line with the spirit of the Officers and men in daily contact. As things stand, the Army Council continually issues orders which have the effect of reducing the organisation to a cross between a reformatory and a lunatic asylum. Only the goodwill and tolerance of the Officers and men make life endurable. We be neither dogs, criminals, or children.

6. We ask for a more generous treatment of younger Officers who, out of a daily casualty list of over 4,000, suffer the heaviest proportionate burden. (1)

This document gives a clear indication of the general state of officer-man relations, although it is fair to note that, by definition, rankers who were involved with this council were atypical. Although far from revolutionary in its aims (2) the very existence of this body represented a direct challenge to the formal hierarchical and disciplinary structure of the army. Yet resolution 5 demonstrates that the council members drew a sharp distinction between senior officers, who were seen as inflicting a humiliating disciplinary system on the men, and regimental officers who were 'in daily contact' with the men and who did their best to modify the system.

Resolution 6 not only offers evidence of the sympathy that existed for junior officers among some other ranks, but can also be interpreted as recognition that a community of interest existed between soldiers and regimental officers, many of whom had risen from the ranks. It was in the interests of those striving for better conditions for the ranks to do the same for junior officers, because many of the rankers would eventually receive a commission. By 1917, it was no longer valid, if indeed it had ever been, to think of officers and men as belonging to two distinct, watertight groups, possessing no knowledge of each other's conditions.

The existence and longevity of a postwar Old Comrades Association (OCA) can offer a broad hint as to the esprit de corps and state of officer-man

(1) WO 32/5455, PRO.

(2) I.F.W. Beckett, 'The Nation in Arms, 1914-18' in Beckett and Simpson, p.24.

relations of a wartime unit. While not all cohesive units formed an OCA, and some units and formations such as 66th Division had associations for officers only, (1) many OCAs seem to have been organisations where former officers and former other ranks could meet on approximately equal terms. In the interwar years, the OCA of 32nd Division Trench Mortar Battery met once a year for dinner on the Saturday nearest Armistice day. This OCA, wrote its Honourary Secretary, a former ranker,

spells brotherhood first and last, and class distinction is taboo'd (sic). The old Tock-Emma [ie trench mortar soldier] is welcome for what he did "out-yonder", and not necessarily for what he is today. (2)

Many OCA members probably had little in common apart from a wish to share and rekindle memories of wartime service in a particular unit. For the most part, former soldiers dwelt on the humour and comradeship, rather than the horrors, of war. (3) Some OCAs, and other veterans' organisations such as the British Legion and the Old Contemptible's Association had a charitable function. In these bodies the paternal pattern of the war years was extended, with ex-officers and ex-soldiers working together to provide financial and other help for poorer members and their families. Some these OCAs continued in operation for an extremely long time. The 22/RF's OCA existed from 1919 to 1976, while the Machine Gun Corps OCA had a similar lifespan. (4) Nostalgia for comradeship and paternalism, which contrasted starkly with many ex-soldiers' experiences of the harshness of life in a land which was far from 'fit for heroes', was undoubtedly a factor in the popularity of OCAs. (5)

Even in the absence of a formal unit OCA, former members of a unit could

(1) 66th East Lancashire Division Dinner Club (Manchester, 1924).

(2) Artillery and Trench Mortar Memories 32nd Division p.687.

(3) R. Whipp, interview; Hatton, p.228.

(4) Woolley, p.175; Sheffield, 'Effect of War Service', pp.95-96; C.E. Crutchley, Machine Gunner 1914-18 (Northampton, 1973) p.174.

(5) See the embittered epilogue in Hatton, pp.283-86.

continue to demonstrate comradeship and respect in time of peace. When, in the 1920s, a former officer of the Accrington Pals died, his chief mourners included five members of the battalion, four of them other ranks, the officer having no family. (1) Former officers and soldiers of many units, particularly locally raised battalions, also met to commemorate the dead, whether at memorial services in Britain or on 'pilgrimages' to the battlefields overseas. (2) Unit histories, especially those of disbanded service units, were another means of commemorating the dead and recapturing wartime esprit de corps. Those produced between 1918 and 1923 in particular, 'although not overtly consensual in tone' often portrayed officer-man relations in terms of a community of interest. (3) Although contributions from other ranks were often included, most unit histories were written by officers. That of the 13th Londons, a TF class corps, written by two NCOs, was a rare exception to this rule.(4)

All members of the Old Contemptibles Association, were, somewhat artificially, referred to as 'chum', regardless of rank. (5) Regimental journals, particularly those produced by OCAs of service units, were full of obituaries, articles and reminiscences written by former officers and former rankers which stressed, consciously or not, that a spirit of comradeship which encompassed all ranks had existed and continued to exist.(6) In sum, the postwar activities of veterans of

(1) W. Turner, Pals: The 11th (Service) Battalion (Accrington) East Lancashire Regiment (Barnsley, nd) p.188.

(2) For the process of commemoration of the dead of 1/4 KOSB, see G. Richardson, For King and Country and Scottish Borderers (Hawick, 1987) pp.84-89.

(3) K.R. Grieves, 'Making Sense of the Great War: Regimental Histories, 1918-23', JSAHR LXIX, No.277 (1991) p.14.

(4) Dunn, passim; C. Stone, A History of the 22nd (Service) Battalion, Royal Fusiliers (Kensington) (London, 1923) pp.16-26; O.F. Bailey and H.M. Hollier, The Kensingtons: 13th London Regiment (London, 1935).

(5) Circular from Old Contemptibles Association, nd, in letter, July 1963, O.Y. Smith, BBC/GW, IWM.

(6) See, among many others, City of London Rifles Quarterly Journal; Old Comrades Journal, 2/4 The Queen's; newsletter of 19th Division RFA Old Comrades Association; Mufti, The Peacetime Record of the Fighting 22nd [22/RF OCA journal].

all ranks offers further evidence that rankers could, and did, regard officers as comrades.

Taking all this evidence into account, one is led to the conclusion that it is indeed valid to talk of a British 'war generation' who shared a common experience. In Janet Roebuck's words,

Under battle conditions class lines came to be overshadowed by the shared experiences of combat and the mutuality of death...The conditions of war made contact between upper-class officers and lower-class soldiers inevitable and gave them a set of common experiences which neither group shared with civilians of their own class. (1)

There is much to be said for Marc Ferro's belief that a 'special "ex-serviceman's" outlook grew up from bitterness and nostalgia' leading to postwar idealisation of the war years although, in the case of Britain, he underestimates the degree of continuity with wartime relationships. (2) Clearly, it would be wrong to assume that all other ranks regarded all officers as comrades. It is likely that some of the more sweeping claims made by officers about the existence of a community of the trenches which united soldiers of all ranks contained a large element of wishful thinking; we return to the fact that other ranks tended to judge their officers on an individual basis, rather than giving their loyalty to officers as a group.

Some politicians attempted to capitalise on their war service in an attempt to win veterans' votes. One such was Sir George McCrae, the Liberal MP who had raised and commanded 16/R. Scots (see above). In an election address of 1923 he claimed to be 'an Ex-service man' who, having 'shared their dangers and hardships' would support the fight of former soldiers for fair treatment.(3) However, it is instructive that men like McCrae and two future prime ministers, Clement Attlee (described as 'Major Attlee' between the wars

(1) J. Roebuck, The Making of Modern English Society From 1850 (London, 1973) p.101. See also A. Marwick, The Deluge (Harmondsworth, 1967 edn.) p.218.

(2) M. Ferro, The Great War 1914-1918 (London, 1973) p.156-7, 225.

(3) Election address in Coll. Misc. 567, BLPES.

partly in an attempt to stress Labour's respectability) and the Conservative, Anthony Eden (who used a photograph of himself in uniform on the cover of his election address in the 1922 general election) were members of the three major established parties.(1) No 'military party' emerged as a force in postwar politics. Sir Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists, which promoted militaristic values and attempted to appeal to ex-servicemen, was electorally unsuccessful. Ex-servicemen's organisations had a minimal political impact. (2) All this suggests that the British war generation was a very different phenomenon from its German counterpart.(3)

That is not to say that a war generation did not exist. It existed in the form of individual relationships between officers and men, forged in the face of hardships shared, to a greater or lesser extent, by all ranks, and dangers which were shared almost equally. Many of these relationships continued after the war through the medium of an ex-serviceman's association. Almost certainly more ex-soldiers remained outside veteran's organisations than joined them, but memories of wartime officer-man relationships continued to be treasured long after the war, even if like Capt. Blagrove and Gnr. Jenner, contact was lost in 1918. Writing nearly fifty years after the event, ex-L/Cpl. S.A. Boyd of 10/RF stated that 'My lasting impression of the Somme battle is the fine young officers who led us so well. They were extremely brave but so young, many under the age of 20'.(4)

Just as the character, ethos and experience of no two military units during the war was the same, veterans of these units reacted to peace in different

(1) K. Harris, Attlee (London, 1982) p.64; R. Rhodes James, Anthony Eden (London, 1986), plate between pp.186 and 187.

(2) S.R. Ward, 'Great Britain: Land Fit for Heroes Lost', in S.R. Ward, (ed.) The War Generation (Port Washington, NY, 1975) pp.31-35.

(3) See J.M. Diehl, 'Germany: Veterans' Politics under Three Flags' in Ward, War Generation.

(4) Letter, nd c.1963, S.A. Boyd, BBC/GW, IWM.

ways. Cohesive 'family' units were probably more likely to establish and maintain OCAs than other units. Nevertheless, as the evidence of soldiers referring in affectionate terms to officers with whom they had lost contact long ago suggests, the British war generation should not be located solely in the reunion dinners and magazines of OCAs of disbanded Pals battalions. The British war generation was characterised by general, if unquantifiable friendly feeling between ranks and classes. Although unquantifiable, it was nonetheless real.

The failure of British veterans to create cohesive political organisations did not mean that their war generation was politically insignificant. In their study of French, German and British literature on the Great War Bessel and Englander concluded that the war generation 'existed only for so long as it remained under fire', and that on demobilisation 'it appears to have disintegrated into its constituent parts'.⁽¹⁾ This interpretation ignores the many ties of affection and comradeship that continued to bind former soldiers of all ranks in peacetime Britain. G.H. Roberts, a trade unionist MP and Minister for Labour, noted after a tour of the Western Front in September 1918 that not only were officer-man relations 'excellent', but that officers wanted 'conditions at home' to improve for their men after the war. Men had come to 'respect their officers' while officers had come

to know and appreciate the lives of their men at home. They have been taught to give every consideration to their comfort in the field, and many of them evidently regard it as their duty to do the same for them at home when the war is over.⁽²⁾

This wartime comradeship and concern was not simply abandoned or forgotten at the Armistice. As noted above, some veterans' organisations were an extension

(1) R. Bessel and D. Englander, 'Up From the Trenches: Some Recent Writing on the Soldiers of the Great War', European Studies Review 11, (1981) p.393.

(2) Quoted in Wilson, Myriad Faces p.802.

of wartime paternalism by other means, and more importantly, in John Keegan's words, many officers conceived 'an affection and concern for the disadvantaged which would eventually fuel that transformation of middle-class attitudes to the poor which has been the most important social trend in twentieth century Britain'. (1) To try to assess something as nebulous as the social attitudes of such a large group as British veterans of the Great War over twenty or more years is a difficult task, to put it mildly; but as Trevor Wilson has pointed out, by the 1940s the idea that a total war entitled the participating population to a 'decent existence' was firmly established, alongside the belief that after 1918 'the rank and file of the nation had been denied their entitlement'. (2) This of course is a prime example of Andreski's 'military participation ratio' in action. (3) Undoubtedly, Keegan's 'process of discovery' played a part in this phenomenon. (4)

Bessel and Englander's argument that the concept of the war generation as such should be left behind in favour of analysis of 'those constituent parts which temporarily comprised it' has much to commend it, but to abandon the idea of a war generation altogether is to risk throwing out the baby with the revisionist bathwater. (5) Although this subject is in need of further examination, it is safe to state that many British officers and rankers believed themselves to be part of a war generation, united by comradeship and the shared experience of combat.

(1) Keegan, p.225.

(2) Wilson, Myriad Faces p.827.

(3) S. Andreski, Military Organisation and Society (London, 1968 edn.).

(4) Sheffield, 'Class Relations', passim.

(5) Bessel and Englander, p.393.

Chapter 9

Officer-Man Relations, Morale and Discipline

In this chapter the consequences of good officer-man relations for the morale and discipline of the British army of 1914-18 will be addressed in greater detail than hitherto. The extent to which distinctive styles of officer-man relations and discipline survived in Territorial, New Army and Regular units will also be examined, and some comparisons will be drawn with the French army, Dominion forces, and the British army of the immediate postwar period.

9.1 Has the Role of the Officer in Maintaining Morale Been Overestimated?

In 1968, R.C. Sherriff, who served as an officer in 9/E. Surreys from 1916-18, wrote that his play Journey's End had been criticised because 'there was too much of the English public schools about it'. Sherriff retorted that 'Almost every young officer was a public school boy' and if he had omitted them from Journey's End, 'there wouldn't have been a play at all.' Furthermore,

Without raising the public school boy officers onto a pedestal it can be said with certainty that it was they who played the vital part in keeping the men good-humored (sic) and obedient in the face of their interminable ill treatment and well-nigh insufferable ordeals.(2)

In a recent book based largely on trench journals and other published material, J.G. Fuller has criticised these views. He argues that public school officers, educated to believe that they were natural leaders of society, could not have been objective in their assessment of their role in maintaining the morale of their men. In addition, he suggests that officers generally tended to overrate the esteem in which they were held by their men; the institutionalised

(1) Sherriff, 'English Public Schools' pp.134, 152.

gulf between the ranks was too great to be bridged; and the rapid turnover in personnel precluded the establishment of close relations.(1) All of these arguments have some validity; the question is, do they have enough to nullify the general thrust of Sherriff's thesis?

The arguments advanced in this present work, supported by much evidence drawn from unpublished sources, offers a broad measure of support for Sherriff's claims. However, Sherriff was indulging in hyperbole by neglecting to mention the large number of non-public school officers that served in the army. In fact, in an account of his early days with his battalion written in the 1930s Sherriff mentioned a number of ranker officers, including one who had great influence on the subalterns, and others with whom he shared a railway carriage on a long journey. Is it impossible to imagine a 'public school' subaltern discussing life in the ranks, and the soldier's view of his officers, with such men? (2) However, in a more general sense, Sherriff was absolutely correct to insist on the importance of public school values in the maintenance of morale, since these were inculcated during officer training.

By the end of 1915 officers' messes were being filled with men who had seen active service in the ranks, who had first-hand experience of the importance of paternalistic leadership to the ordinary soldier, such as the middle-class lance-corporal of 1/4 Gloucesters who wrote of the insights he had gained. These served him in good stead when he was commissioned into 16/Manchesters, his divisional commander paying tribute to his understanding of, and sympathy with, his men.(3) In August 1914 a private noted in his diary his

(1) J.G. Fuller, Troop Morale and Popular Culture in the British and Dominion Armies 1914-1918 (Oxford, 1991) pp.53-56.

(2) R.C. Sherriff, 'My Diary' in The Journal of the East Surrey Regiment I, No.2, (1937) pp.109-18. For some comments on ranker-officers by an officer of 9/E.Surreys, see L.C. Thomas, KRS Q.

(3) T.A.M. Nash (ed.), The Diary of an Unprofessional Soldier (Chippenham, 1991) p.ix, 27.

gratitude to his paternal colonel who provided soft drinks at the end of a long route march. Small wonder that in September 1918 we find the same soldier, now a company commander, distributing to his men cigarettes which had been brought up by the padre. (1)

There were several other ways in which officers could come to know the 'character and thoughts' of their soldiers. (2) Simply working alongside the men could be beneficial. (3) Junior officers had to read and censor their men's letters. This was an activity disliked by both officers and men, even if they reluctantly recognised its necessity. (4) A number of officers commented that reading these letters gave them an insight into the mind of the writer. Charles Douie (1/Dorsets) entered 'a new world, with interests and standards of which I had previously no experience'. (5) Harold Macmillan (4/Gren. Gds.) gained 'an insight into the lives of his men' which contributed to his lifelong interest in, and sympathy for, working-class people. Indeed, as an MP in the interwar years, Macmillan found his relationship with his constituents in Stockton to be similar to that of a company officer and his troops. (6)

It may be argued that censoring his letters was not the best way to understand a man. The letters were often 'similar and childish', (7) and one historian has described them as 'a demotic literary genre' which disguised the true feelings of the writer. (8) Some were pure fiction, sent as a joke, or even

(1) F. Hawkings (A. Taylor, ed.) From Ypres to Cambrai (Morley, 1974) pp.6, 133.

(2) G.S. Hutchison, Warrior (London, 1932) p.13.

(3) Eberle, p.44.

(4) F.O.O., pp.79-80; unpublished account, p.4, S.H.Raggett papers, 90/1/1, IWM.

(5) Douie, p.42.

(6) A. Horne, Macmillan 1894-1956 (London, 1988) p.36. See Lewin, pp.261-2 for a comparison with Attlee, who believed that industrial relations should be conducted on the lines of the officer-man relationship that he had experienced in the Great War.

(7) Letter, 13 Nov. 1915, J.O. Coop papers, 87/56/1 IWM.

(8) Waites, 'Government of Home Front' p.188.

to win money from gullible newspapers.(1) Against these arguments must be set the fact that many of the rankers' letters surviving in archives are very frank, (2) although it is only fair to mention that some rankers went to considerable lengths to avoid censorship by sending letters home by unofficial routes, such as giving them to men going on leave to post in England.(3) Some officers were less than whole-hearted in their censoring duties: at one stage, 1/5 BW even issued envelopes pre-stamped with the censor's mark. (4)

Officers were sometimes struck by the openness with which men displayed their emotions in their letters home. After 2/4 DWR had been engaged at Cambrai in November 1917, Capt. B.D. Parkin censored his men's letters and gained 'a peep into the soul of those who had acted so bravely for three days of battle'. These letters contained few exaggerations, and were frank and 'full of relief' at having survived the ordeal. They contained both good and bad news; and interestingly from the point of view of officer-man relations, many made favourable references to the pre-battle address delivered by their popular brigade commander, Brig.Gen. Bradford.(5) Whatever their normal diffidence about committing their thoughts to paper, these men treated their letters home as a form of catharsis. Although many other ranks' letters were indeed uninformative and stereotyped, it was possible for officers to gain real insights into the

(1) Anon, 'Memories III - The Minor Pleasures of War', in Twenty Years After, supp. vol. p.238; Dunn, p.65.

(2) See for example letter, 22 May 1917, W.T. King papers, 89/7/1, IWM in which a private comments on the incidence of shellshock among officers and men.

(3) Letter, 6 Aug. 1917, W.E. Hoad papers, LULLC; 1 Nov. 1914, 23 Feb. 1915, WD, Chief Censor, Advanced Base, WO 95/3987, PRO; GRO 602, 612, Extracts From General Routine Orders, 71-273, RMASA; Army Order 121, 24 July 1916 71-225, RMASA.

(4) 1 Apr. 1915, WO 95/3987, PRO. For an individual officer's perfunctory censorship of letters, see letter, 10 Oct. 1915, H.A. Bowker papers, LULLC.

(5) Unpublished account, notebook II, B.D. Parkin papers, 86/57/1, IWM.

minds of their men by reading them. Furthermore, the weight of evidence presented in this thesis strongly suggests that officers, public school or otherwise, were in a good position to assess the importance of leadership in maintaining the morale of the other ranks, not least through consultation with NCOs (see chapter 8).

Dr Fuller's analysis of inter-rank relations forms only a very small part of his book, which breaks new ground in emphasising the importance of working-class culture in maintaining the morale of British troops on the Western Front. His work on this topic is not incompatible with the notion that officer-man relations played an important role in the maintenance of morale.

9.2 Officer-Man Relations and Morale

It is not suggested that officer-man relations were solely responsible for keeping morale high. Food, drink and tobacco; recreation; comradeship; humour; reminders of home, such as letters from family and friends; trust in leaders and belief in their cause; success in battle; and sheer stoicism were all of vital importance.(1) Correlli Barnett has argued that the hardships and poverty endured by the working classes in their everyday life, and the danger everpresent in many of their peacetime occupations, prepared them for the conditions endured by soldiers on the Western Front. He asserts that many soldiers were 'better off in the trenches than at home'. In France, unlike at home, the working man 'had the support - moral and material - of an immense organisation' which looked after his welfare. It might be added some middle-

(1) For a comparison with 1939-45, see D. Butler, 'The British Soldier in Italy', pp.13-32, CAB 101/224 and S.R. McMichael, A Historical Perspective on Light Infantry (Ft. Leavenworth, KS, 1987) pp.33-35.

class soldiers felt that military life was an improvement on their civilian existence, the 'prison-like life of a city office', as one described it.(1) The thrust of Barnett's thesis has been echoed by other modern writers such as Michael Howard and J.M. Bourne. (2)

Barnett's work is important, not least because he places the experience of the working-class soldier at centre-stage, rather than generalising from the writings of a tiny number of officer poets, as too many literary specialists and cultural historians have done. (3) There is little direct evidence from working-class soldiers to support his central argument, although it is hardly surprising that poorly educated men were not inclined to analyse their state of morale in sociological terms. However, occasionally one comes across comments such as that of the soldier who recalled that one 'got used to' being 'wet cold and hungry'; this stoicism can perhaps be related to his poverty-stricken background. (4)

Many contemporary observers testified to the stoicism and powers of endurance of working-class soldiers. Writing of the men of 2/DLI, many of whom were miners, a ranker in a London class corps noted that the life of the Regular private 'was a pretty hard one':

He gets little consideration from his officers, he is paid very little, in fact he has every encouragement to down tools and strike, instead of which he plods on steadily, grouching and grumbling, always kept hard at work, getting drunk as often as possible, but ready and willing at the

(1) Tucker, p.49.

(2) C. Barnett, 'A Military Historian's View of the Great War', Essays by Divers Hands, Being the Transactions of the Royal Society of Literature, XXXVI, 1970, pp.1-18; Barnett, Collapse of British Power pp.428-35; J.M. Bourne, Britain and the Great War 1914-1918 (London, 1989) p.220; M. Howard, 'The Art of the Tat', TLS 9-15 Feb. 1990, p.138.

(3) See Fussell; E.J. Leed, No Man's Land (Cambridge, 1979); S. Hynes, A War Imagined (London, 1990).

(4) Unpublished account, pp.1-6, 41, P. Creek papers, 87/31/1, IWM.

final call - "faithful unto death".(1)

Similarly, after watching his men play two games of football a week after his battalion had taken heavy casualties, an officer of 11/Argylls confided to his diary that 'the recuperative powers of the British Tommy are wonderful'.(2)

The major weakness in Barnett's argument lies in the fact that not even the most dangerous of civilian jobs could prepare a man for the reality of battle, and many working-class occupations, servants, for instance, were not especially dangerous. It should also be noted that stoicism was not confined to working-class soldiers. Army life, particularly on active service, blunted the sensibilities of many middle-class men. An infantryman of the Second World War believed that the secret was to 'conquer the abnormal by the simple device of treating it as if it were normal'. (3) There is something of this in one middle-class NCO's tongue-in-cheek theory that men who were killed 'had failed to keep up their spirits'; the spirit, he felt, could divert shells from their course.(4) One veteran believed that soldiers 'chose to make fun of their situation'; had they acknowledged the reality, 'the men would have "cracked" and collapsed'. (5) Some soldiers became fatalists, accepting the prospect of death and becoming reconciled to it. One such was an MGC private, a prewar clerk, who wrote a moving letter to be posted to his family in the event of his death in which he spoke calmly of dying, and which ended with a prayer. (6)

(1) Letter, 21 Nov. 1915, P.H. Jones papers, P. 246, IWM. For similar sentiments expressed by another middle-class ranker see letter, 15 Mar. 1915, N.F. Ellison papers, DS/Misc/49, IWM.

(2) Diary, 6 May 1917, R.L. Mackay papers, IWM. See also H. Dearden, Medicine and Duty (London, 1928) p.IX.

(3) F. Majdaleny, The Monastery (London, 1957 edn.) p.103.

(4) Unpublished account, p.284, C.F. Jones papers, LHCMH.

(5) Letter, Oct. 1963, A.R. Armfield, BBC/GW, IWM.

() Letter, 28 Aug. 1917, W.L. Fisher papers, 85/32/1, IWM. See also H. Williamson, introduction to [Bell], A Soldier's Diary p.xiv.

Nevertheless, the efforts of individuals to keep up morale were greatly enhanced by the 'immense organisation' to which Barnett refers, in which regimental officers played a crucial, although underrated, part. The role of popular culture was, as Fuller convincingly demonstrates, of considerable importance. The replication of patterns of civilian leisure - sport, concert parties, social drinking - helped to keep the reality of service on the Western Front at bay. While rankers were perfectly capable of making their own entertainment, the importance of officers in providing organised leisure at unit level should not be underestimated.

To take several battalions at random, officers of 9/R. I. Rif. encouraged their men to 'indulge in their favourite pastimes' (1) while 2/6 King's¹ boasted an orchestra, raised from former professional musicians. (2) 1/16 Londons provided a regimental canteen, directed by an officer, where very cheap food, beer and tobacco were sold to the men, profits being used to supplement official rations. While training in 1917 most afternoons were devoted to sport, with trips being arranged to a swimming pool. There were also horse shows and sports days, complete with the Divisional band, the 'Bow Bells' concert party, coconut shy, tea and beer. The unit historian noted that 'it may appear somewhat incongruous, in a war history, to devote space to a sports meeting', but went on to argue that 'such events have a direct bearing on the development of that esprit de corps and the will to win' which brought about victory. Such 'trivial' pleasures should be seen in the context of recent grim experiences. The sports engendered 'A spirit of enthusiasm and lightheartedness, which is difficult for those who have not experienced the ups and downs of war fully to realise...' (3) As a

(1) 1-10 Feb. 1917, WD, 9/R. I. Rif., WO 95/2503, PRO.

(2) C.F. Wurtzburg, The History of the 2/6 (Rifle) Battalion 'The King's' (Liverpool Regiment) 1914-19 (Aldershot, 1920) pp.93-94.

(3) Henriques, p.164.

Guards officer commented, 'the simplest change gave the men pleasure'. (1) The importance of the provision of amusements was well understood by officers.(2)

Officers performing in unit concerts provided a valuable safety mechanism. Officers stepped down from the pedestal of rank and hierarchy, albeit briefly, allowing rankers to cheer or jeer them with impunity. Surprisingly few of these officer 'turns' seem to have undermined discipline. Indeed, it may have enhanced it. An undersized officer of 2/6 LF provided some impromptu cabaret at a concert at Christmas 1915 by colliding with the bass drum. Thereafter, this officer, a favourite with his men, was often greeted by calls of '"Who fell thro' t'big drum? Little Tich!'" Not only does this incident demonstrate the way in which officer-man relations could be enhanced by sharing in entertainments, the fact that it was recorded in the battalion history, written by two former officers, speaks volumes about the relaxed nature of officer-man relations in this TF unit. (3)

9.3 Leadership, Morale and the Alleviation of Stress

The morale-enhancing infrastructure notwithstanding, few men could undergo the strain of frontline service indefinitely. Lord Moran, who served as RMO of 1/RF, believed that a man has only a limited 'bank' of courage or 'willpower' 'and when in war it is used up, he is finished'. There was no such thing as getting used to battle. Men, like clothes, simply wore out. The time

(1) C. Dudley Ward, The Welsh Regiment of Foot Guards 1915-1918 (London, 1936) p. 52.

(2) Col. M.G.N. Stopford, lecture on trench warfare, p.13, Conf.3898, SCL; G.F.R. Hirst, KRS Q:

(3) Potter and Fothergill, p.16.

taken to expend the 'capital' varies with the intensity of combat, but if a soldier fights for long enough, his courage will be exhausted.(1) Moran's basic theory, although modified by more recent scholars, is still influential. (2)

It is difficult to establish precise figures for rates of 'shellshock' (3) (in 1914-18, a generic term for psychiatric disorders brought about by combat). In 1939, some 120,000 men were receiving pensions for 'primary psychiatric disability' as a result of service in the First World War, which represented about 15 per cent of all pensioned disabilities.(4) These bare figures do not tell the whole story. A distinction can be usefully drawn between 'battle stress', which is experienced by all soldiers in action, and 'battleshock', stress so severe that it renders the soldier a casualty. Clearly, many men suffered from battle stress which was serious but not severe enough to incapacitate. In August 1916 86 MG Coy reported that about eight per cent of the unit had been admitted to hospital 'owing chiefly to the strain of the previous 5 weeks' (5) while a doctor believed that 'practically every man' evacuated from Gallipoli to Lemnos in December 1915 'was neurasthenic' whether 'he was supposed to be fit or not'.(6) One infantryman frankly admitted that a week of fighting on the Somme in 1916 had deprived him of courage. To use Moran's terminology, he had made a sudden withdrawal of capital, which all but

(1) Lord Moran, The Anatomy of Courage (London, 1945) p.X.

(2) Holmes, Firing Line pp.214-15; A. Kellelt, Combat Motivation (Boston, MA, 1982) p.276-78, 300; T. Copp and B. McAndrew, Battle Exhaustion (Montreal, 1990) pp.5, 81-82.

(3) P.J. Leese, 'A Social and Cultural History of Shellshock, with Particular Reference to Experience of British Soldiers During and After the Great War', (Ph.D, Open University, 1989) pp.22-24.

(4) Ahrenfeldt, p.10; Kellelt, p.274.

(5) 7 Aug. 1916, WD of 86 M.G. Coy, WO 95/2302, PRO.

(6) Evidence of A.F. Hurst, Report of the War Office Committee of Enquiry Into "Shell-Shock" (1922) Cmd. 1734, p.25.

closed the account. However, a period spent in a rest camp or in a quiet sector could help to restore an individual's morale.(1) At the very least, it can be said that psychiatric casualties were something which most officers and men were likely to encounter on the Western Front.

The widely held belief that shellshock was the product of weakness led to a reluctance to admit to the existence of psychiatric casualties. (2) Some frontline soldiers disputed the view that victims of shellshock displayed 'weakness', and traditional views also began to be challenged within the medical profession.(3) By the end of the war, psychiatric casualties were beginning to be treated according to the principles recognised by modern armies.(4)

Many Regular officers believed that there was a close link between the incidence of psychiatric casualties and the state of a unit's morale, discipline, and leadership. These views were enshrined in the 'Summary of Findings' of the 1922 Shellshock Committee, which baldly stated that 'A battalion whose morale is of a high standard will have little "shell shock"'.(5) A modified version of this view is held by most modern scholars, who suggest that membership of a cohesive unit with high morale and good leadership can retard - although not prevent - the onset of mental collapse. (6)

(1) Unpublished account, p.95, E. Partridge papers, LULLC.

(2) See for instance A. Macphail, Official History of the Canadian Forces in the Great War 1914-19: The Medical Services (Ottawa, 1925) p.278.

(3) G. Sparrow and J.N. MacBean Ross, On Four Fronts with the Royal Naval Division (1918) p.237; T. Bogacz, 'War Neurosis and Cultural Change in England 1914-22: The Work of the War Office Committee of Enquiry into "Shell Shock"', JCH 24, (1989) pp.227-256.

(4) See C.S. Myers, Shell Shock in France, 1914-18 (Cambridge, 1940). For a modern view on the nature and treatment of battle stress, see Gabriel, esp. pp.25-45, 137-58.

(5) Shell-Shock Report pp.13-14, pp.36-7, 50, 93. See also K. Simpson, 'Dr. Dunn and Battle Stress - The Experiences and Reflections of the Regimental Medical Officer of the 2/Royal Welch Fusiliers 1915-1918', GW, 3, No.3 (1991) pp.84-85.

(6) Copp and McAndrew, pp.5, 81-2; Holmes, Firing Line p.259.

The role of the officer in minimising psychiatric casualties was twofold. Firstly, officers could spot men approaching breakdown, and remove them from frontline duties, to allow them to replenish their stock of courage. This technique, practised by contemporary armies, does not seem to have been much used in 1914-18, although it is possible that it was carried on unofficially. The RMO of 1/10 King's, Capt. Noel Chavasse, is one of the few officers who is recorded as adopting this approach. (1)

Secondly, the officers could minimise the physical and mental factors that contributed to stress by exercising a paternal concern for the welfare of their men, such as ensuring that the men were well fed. Although the rations of the British soldier tended to be monotonous and unappetising,(2) regular supplies of food, drink and tobacco were all important in maintaining the morale of soldiers of all social classes. One ranker believed that 'Nothing changed one's spirits from buoyancy to utter despondency more quickly than a shortage or surfeit of rations'. (3) In a quiet moment, the immediate reaction of the British soldier was to light a cigarette and brew tea. Letters home are full of requests for cigarettes, for as one ranker of 1/21 Londons put it, 'it is rotten to be without a smoke'.(4) At one stage in the Palestine campaign, noted a sergeant of 5/Welsh, the lack of tobacco reduced men to smoking tea leaves.(5) A ranker claimed that tea, 'even when made in onion-haunted dixies and stewed over a smoking fire...conserved and yielded a delicate fragrance, an exquisite suggestion of civilisation'.(6)

(1) A.M. McGilchrist, The Liverpool Scottish, 1900-19 (Liverpool, 1930) p.103.

(2) Anon, 'Memories XIV - The Minor Miseries of War', in Twenty Years After, II, p.1121.

(3) Smith, Four Years p.100.

(4) Letter, 5 Sept 1915, G. Banks-Smith papers, LULLC.

(5) Diary, 8 Nov. 1917, J.M. Thomas papers, 88/56/1 IWM.

(6) J. Brophy, 'The Soldier's Nostrils', in C. O'Riordan et al, A Martial Medley (London, 1931) pp.124-5. See also Dunn, p.18.

The officer also had an important role in the distribution of rum, which was supposed to be drunk in the presence of an officer to prevent it being hoarded.(1) The rum issue was undoubtedly popular, and gave some men 'dutch courage' before battle. Pte. B.F. Eccles (7/R. Bde.) admitted that he went through battle 'far better than I ever imagined' as a result of drinking rum.(2)

Brophy's comment, quoted above, indicates one of the principal reasons for the popularity of caffeine and nicotine: they represented a slender thread of continuity with normal life, and reminders of home are important in reducing stress and maintaining morale. This fact underlines the importance of the practice of distribution of gifts of cigarettes and other luxuries by officers, and the considerable efforts made by regimental officers to ensure that their men had hot meals and tea. The regimental officer had a vital role in ensuring that soldiers benefitted from the 'bureaucracy of paternalism', which was dedicated to the upkeep of the soldier's morale. This role helped to cement comradeship between the ranks. In that it was also an example of officers adhering to the unspoken assumptions inherent in the deferential relationship, it also 'provided further continuity with the civilian experience of working-class soldiers.

Conditions at the front were an important source of stress. A Guards private recorded that some men appeared to rather more afraid of the ever-present rats than they were of shells and bullets. (3) Bad weather, mud, lice and boredom also ranked high among the stresses of war. (4) At the front, most soldiers were

(1) F.C. Hitchcock, Stand To (London, 1988 edn.) p.122; R.D. Fisher papers, p.12, 76/54/1 IWM; Divisional Trench Orders 1917 p.9; S.S. No.408, Some of the Many Questions a Platoon Commander should ask himself on taking over a Trench, and at intervals afterwards, p.7; Steuart, p.182.

(2) Letter, 19 Sept. 1916, B.F. Eccles papers, 82/22/1, IWM.

(3) Letter, 19 July 1915, H. Venables papers, LULLC.

(4) Bowra, p.81; R.J. Wyatt, 'The Major "Minor Horror of War"', ST, 23, (Aug. 1988) pp.29-30; Aldington, p.250.

permanently tired. In the trenches, sleep was a rare and precious commodity. Men who managed to ignore the cold, rain, noise, bustle and rats would, before long, be roughly shaken awake for their turn on sentry-go or to stand-to. Even the periods out of the line, which were quaintly termed 'rest' by the army, were punctuated by exhausting bouts of physical labour. Men were not infrequently reduced to a drugged, dream-like state, unable to react even to threats to life and limb.(1)

On marches, and sometimes on the battlefield, the soldier was heavily weighed down with a pack and equipment which weighed as much as 60 lbs. One private complained that the military authorities never seemed to realise that 'our spirits rose with the lightening of our bodies'.(2) In fact many regimental officers sympathised with the rankers' struggle to endure route marches bowed down with what L/Cpl. R. Mountford (10/RF) described as 'a cruel, unnatural weight that no man should be called upon to carry'.(3) There are many examples of officers (and NCOs) putting paternalism into practice by carrying men's rifles and packs on long marches. G.H. Cole (1/20 Londons) would have his groom bring up his horse on leaving the trenches but he rarely rode it, using it instead to carry the packs of weary soldiers.(4) Pte. R.H. Sims (1/4 R. Sussex) wrote of a four hour route march under the heat of an Egyptian sun. The march was a sore trial but for Sims the one redeeming feature was the conduct of his officers:

our company captain is a true gentle man & a brick & so are all the officers as those who had horses carried chaps equipment & those who were marching

(1) R. Whipp, interview. See also J. Ellis, Eye Deep in Hell (London, 1976) passim.

(2) Unpublished account, pp.19-20, R.D. Fisher papers, pp.19-20, 76/54/1, IWM.

(3) Quoted in Brown, Tommy Goes to War p.56.

(4) G.H. Cole, KRS Q.

carried the mens rifles, our captain alone carrying two...(1)

A rarely considered aspect is the mental and physical strain endured by officers as they strove to set an example on long marches by suppressing signs of weariness.(2)

The role of the officer in providing mental comfort for the ranker, by countering fears that the individual soldier was impotent in the face of the military moloch, has been discussed above. Here, the fate of one group of men who were especially vulnerable to stress will be considered. During the war the army received many men who were unsuited to the rigours of life in the ranks through age, infirmity, or physical unfitness.

Life in the army could be grim for such men. One, Pte. James Williams (29th Labour Coy., Queen's) may stand as representative. He was conscripted at the age of 38 in March 1917, having spent twenty years working as a clerk. Although he enjoyed some aspects of military life, he did not adjust to life at the bottom of the military hierarchy. Williams resented discipline, describing being ordered to be inoculated as 'being treated like so many dogs', and he disliked his working-class fellow rankers. Having worked for so long in a sedentary occupation, he found it difficult to cope with the physical demands of military life. Much of his work consisted of heavy loading. (3) Williams once wrote that he 'Turned in thoroughly worn out & worked up to a pitch of intense hatred to (sic) the life out here what with the filthy mouthed men one has to work with out here'.(4) Williams did not have the compensation of service in a cohesive unit with high esprit de corps. Neither did he have a particularly

(1) Diary, 4 Mar. 1916, R.H. Sims papers, 77/130/1, IWM.

(2) Brown, Tommy Goes to War p.56.

(3) Diary, 2, 5, 6, 8 Mar., 11, July 1917, J. Williams papers, 83/14/1, IWM.

(4) Diary, 21 July 1917, J. Williams papers, 83/14/1, IWM.

sympathetic NCO or officer, although at least one officer seems to have been paternal in a general way, buying beer for the men, which Williams characteristically 'declined with thanks'.(1)

Williams' experience can profitably be compared with that of Pte. Frank Grey (8/R. Berks.) a middle-class journalist who was conscripted at the age of 37. Grey benefited both from service in a cohesive unit and the leadership of paternal officers. Grey was given an easy job on account of his advanced years and showed his gratitude by dedicating his war memoirs to his commanding officer, Lt. Col. R.E. Dewing, whom he described as 'a humane, kind and courageous' man.(2) The difference in cohesion between an infantry and a labour unit is worth noting; the former had the experience of combat to bind the ranks, the latter did not. Many other similar examples could be cited. Pte. Birdsall of 2/4 DWR was appointed as an officer's servant because he was older than most other privates, and was physically weak, having been wounded.(3) In 7/KSLI, according to 2/Lt. N. Hughes-Hallett, older men were often given jobs as sanitary men. The work was unpleasant but such men were excused most parades.(4)

Younger middle-class soldiers were also treated with sympathy by some of their officers. A former London clerk, Pte. R.D. Fisher (1/24 Londons) shared a keen interest in serious music with his officer, Lt. Poll, and sometimes they would talk briefly about the subject. Occasionally, Poll would slip a copy of a musical magazine into Fisher's pocket. Such relationships were not without their difficulties. The need to avoid overstepping the bounds of 'familiarity' was obvious: Fisher referred to Lt. Poll as 'a friend in spirit rather than fact, owing no doubt to the difference in rank'.(5) Traditionally-minded NCOs

(1) Diary, 16 June 1917, J. Williams papers, 83/14/1, IWM.

(2) Grey, Confessions of a Private dedication and pp.127-8.

(3) Unpublished memoir, notebook 1, B.D. Parkin papers, 86/57/1, IWM.

(4) Quoted in Brown, Imperial War Museum p.55.

(5) Unpublished account, pp. 89-90, R.D. Fisher papers, 76/54/1, IWM.

could be horrified by such relationships. In Aldington's novel Death of a Hero, 'Winterborne', an educated ranker, is singled out by an officer who asks him to take a commission, and then they shake hands, 'to the impressed horror of the NCOs'.(1)

As so often, Manning's great war novel provides a valuable insight:

although the conventions which separated officers from men were relaxed to some extent on active service, between men of roughly the same class they tended to become more rigid. Even when momentarily alone together, they recognised, tacitly, something a little ambiguous in the relation in which they stood to each other...(2)

Nevertheless, in the opening scene of The Middle Parts of Fortune, where Pte. Bourne encounters a subaltern in the aftermath of a battle, Manning captures a moment in which the two men meet in a dugout, share a drink from a whisky bottle, and talk almost as equals. The formal barrier of rank has temporarily dissolved and is replaced by a relationship characterised primarily by mutual respect. Although both men dispense with formalities, neither man tries to take advantage of the situation, and the fundamentals of discipline are not challenged. They then leave the dugout where they resume normal relations. In this instance, as in so many others, the army adage 'on parade, on parade; off parade, off parade' can be usefully applied.(3)

Manning's portrait of relations between privates and NCOs and privates and officers has been criticised as unrealistic. (4) The suggestion that Bourne is on 'unusually informal terms with his officers and NCOs' (5) is more accurate, but as this thesis has demonstrated, informal and friendly relations between officers and men were by no means uncommon in the British army of 1914-18,

(1) Aldington, p.237.

(2) Manning, p.229.

(3) Ibid, pp.2-4.

(4) C.N. Smith, 'The Very Plain Song of It: Frederic Manning, Her Privates We', in H. Klein (ed.) The First World War in Fiction (London, 1978 edn.) pp.176-8.

(5) B. Gammage, The Broken Years (Ringwood, Victoria, 1975 edn.) p.240.

even in units which did not employed a liberal disciplinary regime. Manning's portrait, based on his experience in the ranks of 7/KSLI, although at variance with the stereotype of inter-rank relations, should be seen as entirely realistic.

The experiences of middle-class rankers such as Williams and C.E. Jacomb (23/RF), who complained that he had been 'spoken to and treated like a dog by practically everyone of higher rank than myself' (1) cannot be ignored, but at the very least it is possible to say that some older and middle-class rankers were singled out for sympathetic treatment by their officers. The effect of good, paternal leadership in alleviating stress and thus enhancing the morale of rankers of all social backgrounds should not be underrated. Rankers knew that they were not simply at the mercy of the military system. As a conscript private of 14/Argylls noted, while recalling a friendly and paternal officer, 'It makes all the difference when one is treated with kindness and consideration by one in authority'.(2)

9.4 Leadership in Battle

The battlefield role of the regimental officer can be divided into command and leadership functions. The former, which falls outside the scope of this thesis, encompassed tactical decision making, allocation of resources and the like. The leadership function can be summarised as the need to ensure that the goals of the primary group are congruent with the goals of the army. One of the most important methods used by the British regimental officer in

(1) C.E. Jacomb Torment (London, 1920) p.320. This statement conflicts with some of Jacomb's earlier comments about paternal NCOs and officers. Ibid pp.73, 171.

(2) C. Haworth, March to Armistice 1918 (London, 1968) p.28.

carrying out this function was to act as a leader in the most literal sense. The disproportionately heavy casualty rates for junior officers suggests that Crozier's belief that officers had to have a 'three seconds lead' over their men in the advance, so they could say 'come on' rather than 'go on' to their men, was widely held.(1)

Social relationships between soldiers lie at the core of combat motivation: soldiers do not want to appear cowardly in front of their comrades.(2) However, given the closeness of inter-rank relationships, fear of letting down an officer could be a source of motivation.(3) It should also be noted that ^{the}regimental officer had to strike a balance between leading from the front and being regarded by his men as a 'thruster', all too ready to sacrifice his men's lives. (4) In the attack, the officer had to overcome his men's fear and lead them into battle; on the defensive, he had to keep them from running away. Training and discipline helped the soldier to choose the 'fight' rather than 'flight' option, but an officer's example was also important.

First, the officer had to suppress his own fears of death or mutilation, although the experienced soldier came to learn how to judge the degree of danger in everyday trench life.(5) Waiting to go into battle was particularly stressful. A conscript private of 6/Queen's believed that 'only those who have faced the ordeal can form an adequate conception of the anxiety of those long minutes which sometimes seemed like hours'.(6) More specific fears included the

(1) Crozier, Impressions and Recollections p.214.

(2) R. Little, 'Buddy Relations and Combat Performance', in M. Janowitz, pp.195-223.

(3) See for example letter, 6 July 1916, Pte. W.A. Hollings, quoted in Milner, p.141.

(4) H. Horne, KRS Q; Tilsey, pp.30, 170; Thorburn, p.183

(5) Diary, 22 (?) Nov, 15 (?), 28 Dec. 1915, J. Griffith papers, IWM.

(6) Unpublished account, p.2, H.L. Adams papers, 83/50/1, IWM. See also Col. M.G.N. Stopford, lecture on trench warfare, Conf. 3898, SCL; Gabriel, pp.31-32.

fear of death and pain, fear for the soldier's family at home and fear of weapons such as gas.(1) Even the noise of friendly artillery could be 'nerve wracking to an amazing degree'. (2) In battle, the soldier's emotions were 'numbed', while their senses were heightened; this is biological reaction of the human body to severe stress. When the immediate danger had passed, the senses 'gradually returned to normal and we looked around us like men awakened from a nightmare'. (3) Manning wrote of the sensitive way officers treated men who were beginning to reassert normal patterns of life and come to terms with the death of their comrades, although long exposure to danger could reduce the impact of such deaths.(4) Nonetheless, as an officer wrote in 1916 'The majority of men... are more or less scared stiff all the time'. (5)

The constant battle of the officer to suppress fear, and set an example to his men, was described by Capt. Hanbury-Sparrow of 2/R. Berks, who was trying to nerve himself to look over a parapet:

For very shame's sake pull yourself together, man...Set them an example. With a dozen pairs of eyes watching you, you unstrap your field-glasses and, kneeling, look over the parapet. (6)

Many officers referred to the strain of command: 'you owed it [to the men] to stick it too', as one phrased it. As this man had previously served in the ranks, he would have been well aware of the importance to the private of the officer's example.(7) By contrast, other officers were exhilarated by command.

(1) Letter, 22 Oct. 1917, J. Mudd papers, IWM; MAF 60/243, PRO.

(2) Letter, 27 Apr. 1915, G.W. Durham papers, IWM.

(3) H.R. Williams, The Gallant Company (Sydney, 1933) pp.62-63.

(4) Manning, pp.13-21; H. Munday, No Heroes, No Cowards (Milton Keynes, 1981) p.17.

(5) Letter, 12 June 1916, H.R. Hammond papers, LULLC. See also V.M. Yeates, Winged Victory (London, 1974 edn.) pp.122, 124-26.

(6) Hanbury-Sparrow, Land-Locked Lake, pp.18-19.

(7) Nettleton, p.113. See also Bion, p.201.

One claimed that responsibility for his men's lives actually reduced his fear in battle, because he had no time to concentrate on himself.(1)

There is plenty of evidence that other ranks of all social classes were influenced by the example of their officers on the battlefield. A young private of 7/R. Bde. commented that 'Our officers were splendid and showed great coolness' during the battle of Arras. (2) Pte. John Gibbons, in a judicious assessment of the role of the officer, implied that the officer did indeed set an example: their 'outward and visible standard of courage' being superior to that of the other ranks.(3) Pte. Frank Dunham (1/7 Londons) claimed that 'One thing only helped to keep our spirits up' while serving at Ypres in September 1917: 'a daily visit from Capt. K.O. Peppiatt. He set us an excellent example in cheerfulness and good humour...' (4) It will be recalled ^{neither} that Gibbons nor Dunham were uncritical admirers of the British officer corps. Other officers were remembered for their leadership in specific situations. Pte. Jimmy Walton (11/Suffolks) admired an officer for his courage in rallying men in Lochnagar Crater on the Somme on 1 July 1916:

"Gentlemen, we're going to be faced with a counterattack. We stand and fight". He might have been on a barrack square - so calm, so collected.(5)

The presence on the battlefield of a few men with the ability to impose their will on their fellow soldiers plays a vital role in preventing men from running away. (6) Such individuals are not necessarily officers or even NCOs, but such formal leaders were trained to set an example. One was Lt. J. Proctor (10/Lincolns), who was decorated for his leadership during the battle of Arras

(1) H. Boustead, The Wind of Morning (London, 1974) p.37;. See also A. Behrend, As From Kemmel Hill (London, 1963) p.147; E. Foster-Hall, KRS Q.

(2) Letter, 16 Apr. 1917, B.F. Eccles papers, 82/22/1, IWM.

(3) Gibbons, p.69.

(4) Dunham, pp.68, 82.

(5) Quoted in Peacock, 'Rendezvous with Death', p.344.

(6) Keegan, p.332.

on 9 April 1917, when his company was held up by uncut wire in front of an enemy position. Such an event could be fatal for the impetus of an attack, therefore Proctor's actions were particularly significant:

He ordered his men to lie down, as snipers were active, while he searched for a gap. He walked up and down making jokes and imitating Charlie Chaplin, keeping the men laughing. The officer was wounded at this point but continued to display the utmost sangfroid.(1)

Proctor's actions, although eccentric, epitomised the leadership traits that characterised the British junior officer. He led from the front, searching for the gap in person, rather than sending an NCO. He demonstrated his courage by walking about despite the threat of snipers and by maintaining a calm demeanour after he had been wounded. Proctor showed concern for his men's lives by making them lie down. Finally, he attempted to keep up the men's morale by his words and actions in a situation in which the men must have been gripped with fear.

An officer commented that the subalterns of 1915-17 were not expected to be tactical geniuses, but they were expected to motivate their men.(2) In 1918 junior leadership by example continued to be vitally important, particularly in the March Retreat, which was very much a 'soldier's battle'. The major difference between leadership in 1918 and in previous years was that it took place in a context of increasing tactical sophistication. By the second half of the year most units had discarded the crude 'waves' of 1916 in favour of the 'blob', or dispersed section column. Yet in an action of 1 September 1918 2/Lt (acting captain) Griffiths (2/4 Londons) 'strode steadily ahead of the advancing line...waving his walking stick above his head and blowing his whistle'. Griffiths showed a 'light-hearted contempt for death'. 2/4 Londons

(1) Citation for Croix de Guerre, quoted in P. Bryant, Grimsby Chums (Hull, 1990) p.92.

(2) Barclay pp.95-96.

had adopted the 'blob', illustrating that tactics had changed by September 1918 but concepts of junior leadership had not.(1) Conversely, on some occasions in the British advance of 1918, leadership from the front by officers who were themselves inexperienced was necessary because of the poor training of the infantry.(2)

Leadership by example on the battlefield must be set against a darker side of the officer's role. It has been claimed by Dave Lamb that officers acted as 'battle police', forcing reluctant soldiers into battle at gun point. (3) I have dealt with the subject elsewhere, and here it will suffice to say that while battle police did exist, they were usually drawn from a unit's regimental police, not officers.(4) Battle police had various official tasks, including traffic control, rounding up stragglers, and arresting deserters, but summary execution was not one of them.

That is not to say that summary executions did not occur. At moments of extreme crisis, officers and, indeed NCOs and ordinary soldiers did threaten, or even carry out, summary executions. In October 1918 a brigade commander discovered some troops bolting under an enemy barrage. He threatened to shoot the first man that passed him, thus bringing the others to a halt; but then managed to win them over, with the help of a joke.(5) However, while a tiny handful of officers did make a practice of summary executions, (6) this practice was never sanctioned by GHQ. Indeed, when on one occasion of extreme crisis

(1) Letter, Oct. 1963, A.R. Armfield, BBC/GW, IWM.

(2) Appx., Sept. 1918, WD of 1/Gordons, WO 95/1435, PRO.

(3) D. Lamb, Mutinies (Oxford and London, nd) p.3.

(4) G.D. Sheffield, 'The Operational Role of British Military Police on the Western Front, 1914-18', in P. Griffith, British Fighting Methods in the Great War (forthcoming).

(5) J. Terraine, (ed.) General Jack's Diary 1914-1918 (London, 1964) pp.277.

(6) F.P. Crozier, A Brass Hat In No Man's Land (London, 1930) 109-110; F.P. Crozier, The Men I Killed (London, 1937) pp.54-56, 61-63.

on
(the Aisne in May 1918, the commander of 19th Division attempted to speed up the process of executions by requesting from GHQ permission to 'confirm and have carried out' death sentences on stragglers, permission was refused.(1)

It is significant that Crozier, who is used by Lamb to illustrate the use of officers as battle police, was described by a fellow officer of 36th Division as having 'unbalanced' views. Furthermore, he claimed that the divisional commander hesitated to promote Crozier because of his 'roughness and the ruthless way he handled his men'. (3) Crozier was not, in this respect, a typical officer. If other ranks had lived in constant fear of being shot by their own officers, it would have destroyed the element of trust which lay at the heart of the officer-man relationship. Further research might uncover more examples of unofficial policies of summary executions being instituted at a local level, but the notion that fear of the officer's revolver was a major factor in officer-man relations can be safely dismissed.

9.5 Failures of Paternalism: Insubordination and Mutiny

In 1918 an artillery sergeant, informally chatting to his officer, told him that there were two reasons why the men remained cheerful in appalling conditions: comradeship and fair treatment by their officers and NCOs.(4) With the latter half of this statement in mind, it is useful to examine some negative evidence about the importance of officer-man relations; that is, occasions on which poor officer-man relations and leadership resulted in low morale. British rankers were by no means blindly obedient cannon-fodder. They were

(1) Letter, nd, Sir G. Jeffrys, CAB 45/114, PRO.

(2) Lamb, pp.3-5; C. Denison, 'From Two Angles' in C. O'Riordan et al p.80.

(3) Letter, 3 May 1930, W.B. Spender, CAB 45/137, PRO.

(4) Gordon, Unreturning Army p.116.

perfectly capable of conveying their displeasure in a number of different ways if they thought themselves unfairly treated.

The most drastic, and risky, way was to assault or murder an officer. In separate incidents two soldiers were executed on the Western Front for striking a superior officer, even although both assaults were minor in nature. (1) Capt. Hamond, in his treatise on officership, wisely urged officers to avoid placing themselves in a situation where even an accidental blow could be laid on an officer. (2) It would have been relatively easy to murder an unpopular officer or NCO under the cover of battle, although, naturally, it is impossible to ascertain how prevalent this practice was. The only new piece of evidence on this subject which has emerged during the research for this thesis is the testimony of a former private of 2/Bedfords who claimed that an officer of the battalion was murdered early in 1915 by a grenade thrown into his dugout. (3) Between 4 August 1914 and 11 November 1918 only one soldier serving on the Western Front was executed for the murder of an officer (this figure excludes Chinese and Cape Coloured labourers). This murder was apparently motiveless, and was committed during a rifle inspection behind the lines - hardly the classic scenario for a 'fragging'. (4) Six men were executed for the murder of NCOs. The paucity of rumours concerning the murder of officers is another factor to be considered when assessing the nature of the officer-man relationship.

To argue with or insult an officer was also a serious offence, but insults were sometimes shouted from the anonymity of the ranks. While blanket

(1) J. Putkowski and J. Sykes, Shot at Dawn (Barnsley, 1989) pp.84-5, 130.

(2) 'Wisdom for Warts', p.6., D. Hamond papers.

(3) H. Myers, interview.

(4) Putkowski and Sykes, p.278.

condemnations of officers did occur - shouts of 'death to our officers' were reported from the camp cinema at Catterick in January 1918 - (1) most protests of this sort seem to have been aimed at individuals who failed to live up^{to} the standards of behaviour that soldiers expected of their officers. A draft of Lancashire Fusiliers leaving for foreign service in 1915 called for 'three cheers' for one officer; but then followed it with 'three boos' for another, who was called 'a slave-driver, a coward, a pig, and several other names not fit to mention'. (2) A variation on this theme occurred in March 1916 when 2/17 Londons, drawn up on parade to witness the presentation of medals, refused to cheer an unpopular officer who had been awarded the MC. (3)

Such methods were used not merely to relieve feelings but also to convey to officers that the men considered behaviour to be unacceptable. On occasions, when senior officers agreed with their men, steps were taken to rectify the situation. An officer of a TF unit, 2/15 Londons, newly arrived from England, was regarded as officious by his men, an opinion which was shared by his company commander. With the latter's tacit sympathy, the men communicated their views to 2/Lt 'Counterjump', as he was nicknamed, for instance by loudly commenting on the poor type of man currently being commissioned. 'Counterjump's' authority was undermined by a conspiracy between the CSM, men and company commander. According to an NCO, 'Counterjump's' career was 'an object lesson on the powerlessness of the officer when his men are against him'. (4)

Such incidents were not confined to TF units with relaxed standards of

(1) GHQ Great Britain, Weekly Intelligence Summaries, 22 Dec. 1917 to 29 Mar. 1918, AIR 1 538/16/15/55, PRO.

(2) Ashurst, p.61. For a similar incident see unpublished account, p.13, A.J. Abraham papers, P.191, IWM.

(3) Diary, 9 Oct. 1916, A. Young papers, 76/101/1. IWM

(4) Unpublished account, pp.61-4, C.F. Jones papers, LHCMA.

discipline. During the winter of 1915-16, a mounted officer of a crack Regular unit, 2/R. Bde., 'very foolishly' shouted "Left-Right-Left" to men emerging from a trench. As Sgt. Riddell noted, 'This is all right at the right time' but to shout orders to exhausted men who had spent six days in muddy trenches, who were marching in thigh boots and were slipping about 'was asking for trouble'. The men shouted abuse from the safety of the darkness. This incident damned the officer in the eyes of his men. Riddell commented that 'if men are beat the same as we were, then was the time to encourage them, even if he had to walk'. Interestingly, Riddell hints that the company commander disapproved with the officer's actions, but for discipline's sake had to side with the officer. One can easily imagine the latter receiving an uncomfortable lecture from his superior. (1)

Mutiny was defined in 1916 as implying 'collective insubordination, or a combination of two or more persons to resist or to induce others to resist lawful military authority'. (2) Most of the mutinies of the Great War era were not ideologically motivated. Even after being socialised into military life, working-class temporary soldiers did not abandon civilian patterns of behaviour or thought, and were liable to react to what they perceived as unfair treatment by their military superiors by going on strike. (3)

A number of minor mutinies occurred during the training of Kitchener and TF units in 1914-15 when conditions were poor and men were relatively unaccustomed to discipline, although such incidents were sporadic rather than widespread. (4)

(1) Unpublished account, p.62 J.W. Riddell papers, 77/73/1, IWM.

(2) F.D. Grierson, The ABC of Military Law (London, 1916) p.74.

(3) L. James, Mutiny (London, 1987) pp.9-15. For some interesting reflections on the nature of strikes, see H. Benyon, Working For Ford (Harmondsworth, 1984 edn.) pp.180-1.

(4) Simkins, Kitchener's Army, pp.200-02, 238-89, 243-44.

Tactful handling by sympathetic officers could often defuse such strikes.(1)
Only on one occasion did a major mutiny of British (as opposed to ^{soldiers} Dominion)
take place on the Western Front, at Etaples base camp in September 1917. (2)

At this date Etaples base camp contained many of the classic ingredients for mutiny. (3) Food and conditions were poor, and there were few leisure facilities in the camp. It is noteworthy that the mutiny began on a Sunday afternoon, when crowds of men had gathered in the camp with nothing to do. Moreover, many of the men who were subjected to a fairly brutal form of recruit training in the 'Bull Ring' had front-line experience, and were returning for a further spell after recovering from their wounds. Men whom had previously undergone this rite of passage, and were accustomed to being treated with a measure of respect by NCOs and officers with whom they shared the dangers of active service, were especially resentful of the military police and the 'canaries' (instructor NCOs), who were perceived as 'column dodgers'. Pte. A.F. Sheppard, (11/R. Sussex), who trained at Etaples in early 1917 after having fought on the Somme, spoke for many when he dismissed the canaries as all 'out of the same box of soldiers competing with each other who could grow the longest moustache and shout the loudest'.(4) In short, there was general resentment that combat veterans were being bullied by men who, unlike regimental officers and NCOs, had not experienced the danger of the trenches.

(1) Lewin, p.16; P. Croney, Soldier's Luck (Ilfracombe, 1965) pp.10-11.

(2) For general discussions of the mutiny see G. Dallas and D. Gill, The Unknown Army (London, 1985) pp.63-81; James, pp.89-98; J. Putkowski, 'Toplis, Etaples & "The Monocled Mutineer"', ST 18, (1986) pp.6-11. As Putkowski convincingly demonstrates, W. Allison and J. Fairley, The Monocled Mutineer (London, 1978) should be treated with extreme care.

(3) J. Putkowski, 'British Army Mutinies in World War One', paper given to RMA Sandhurst War Discussion Group, 19 Feb. 1990.

(4) Letter, nd, A.F. Sheppard, BBC/GW, IWM.

The army's disciplinary regime was expanded to nightmarish proportions at Etaples. Writing of a similar camp at Rouen in 1915, a ranker supposed that in a base where 'thousands of men' drawn from many regiments 'are herded together' there was 'bound to be a lack of esprit-de-corps (sic) and sense of comradeship'. He went on to write that the result was that everyone hated drill, implying that drill carried out in the parent unit was at least tolerable, and that esprit de corps could offset bullshit.(1) Likewise, at Etaples two of the pillars of unit cohesion, esprit de corps and paternal junior officers who could intervene to modify the disciplinary system and protect their men, were absent. Officers were kept well away from the men, and the usual unit structure did not exist. The creative tension that existed between the army's disciplinary system and the paternalism of the junior officers was absent at Etaples, where unalloyed discipline ruled supreme.

Capt. J.H. Dible, a medical officer at Etaples, blamed the disturbances on those officers who treated citizen soldiers 'with the same rigid methods' more appropriate to long service Regulars. Although 'very often' officers realised 'the changed conditions and made allowances', he believed that one bad officer could negate the work of twenty good ones. This problem was aggravated by the fact that there was disparity in the conditions of officers and men, which was the fault of the staff rather than the regimental officer. (2)

Although one mutineer was executed for inciting a picquet to attack its officer, there is little other evidence of mutineers expressing resentment of regimental officers, providing they did not attempt to defend the military police or 'canaries'. (3) The war diary of the commandant of Etaples base

(1) Letter, 3 Aug. 1915, p.131, P.H. Jones papers, P.246, IWM.

(2) Diary, 11 Sept. 1917, pp. 178-9, J.H. Dible papers, IWM.

(3) Babington, Sake of Example pp.132-33, but see Liddle, Soldier's War pp.79-80.

states that on the first day of the mutiny 'Feeling in the crowd was only against the police and Officers were treated respectfully. The officers gradually got the men back to camp, and by 9.45-10pm all was quiet'. On 10 September it was recorded that 'The demeanour of all crowds towards Officers was perfectly good'.(1) This evidence is corroborated by a middle-class female ambulance driver who recalled the mutiny as 'an orderly affair, with officers mingling with the men in sympathy and keeping order'.(2) Likewise, a ranker-officer of the 2/RF stated in his memoirs that the mutineers 'had no quarrel with fighting officers...we went over to Paris Plage every day unmolested by the mutineers...'.(3) The 'canaries' and military police, not regimental officers, were the targets of the mutineers' hatred.

Dallas and Gill see the Etaples mutiny as marking a major change in officer-man relations, with generals no longer prepared to trust the other ranks. They also dismiss junior officers' opinions on the essential reliability of their troops as wishful thinking. (4) The evidence presented in Chapter 3 of this thesis throws some doubt on both of these statements. If the Etaples mutiny is seen as the military version of a strike, there is no need to question the reliability of the army as a whole. At unit level, a basic reserve of goodwill between the ranks, together with a measure of tact and man-management skill on the part of the officers and the essential willingness of the men to obey,

(1) 9-10 Sept. 1917, WD of Commandant, Etaples Base Camp, WO 95/4027, PRO.

(2) Letter, G.F. Oppenshaw, Observer 23 Feb. 1964.

(3) E. Parker, Into Battle 1914-1918 (London, 1964) p.86. See also C.B. Brereton, Tales of Three Campaigns (London, 1926) for the views of a NZ officer sympathetic towards the mutineers. Although the accounts of Oppenshaw, Parker and Brereton are inaccurate in details, they are very revealing of junior officers' attitudes towards the mutiny.

(4) Dallas and Gill, p.76.

providing, of course, that the unspoken code of the deferential relationship was observed, served to defuse most problems. In the very different conditions prevailing at Etaples, rankers began what Julian Putkowski has termed 'collective bargaining in khaki'.⁽¹⁾ This was not dissimilar to workers' behaviour in prewar industrial disputes, and there are obvious parallels with 'collective bargaining by riot' in ^{the} eighteenth century. ⁽²⁾ The men took direct action by breaking out of camp and enjoying the forbidden fruits of Etaples town, but their aims were limited, not revolutionary.

The Etaples strike resulted in the removal of an unpopular APM and Base Commandant, the town of Etaples being thrown open to the men and, ultimately, the training function being removed from Etaples and made a Corps responsibility, where more sympathetic treatment for the men might have been expected. Capt. Dible recorded that officers were divided into two schools of thought over the appropriate response to the events at Etaples. Older, Regular officers were in favour of repression, while others were in favour of discovering the men's grievances and rectifying them. To adopt the former response, Dible argued, would be to risk a further outbreak, risking 'mutiny, bloodshed, and possibly civil war and revolution'. ⁽³⁾ In fact, the military authorities, by making relatively minor concessions, succeeded in halting the single most serious disturbance of the war, and removed the basic ingredients which might have caused a second major mutiny. In sum, the only major British mutiny on the Western Front highlights the importance of good officer-man relations in maintaining military morale and cohesion, and the generally sound

(1) Letter, J. Putkowski, The Guardian 26 Sept. 1986.

(2) See J. Stevenson, Popular Disturbances in England 1700-1870 (London, 1979) pp.113-135.

(3) Diary, p.182, 11 Sept. 1917, J.H. Dible papers, IWM.

state of officer-man relations in the BEF.

A number of minor mutinies occurred on active service. In 1917 Alan Thomas, an officer of 1/6 RWK, was faced with what he described as a 'sit-down strike' of men on a carrying party. Thomas, who had some sympathy with the men's grievances, threatened them with his revolver but in retrospect believed he should have accepted the protest as a fait accompli, rather than risking a test of his authority. One should imagine many such situations occurring but going (for understandable reasons) unrecorded, being defused by immediate disciplinary action, or the threat of it, or through tactful handling. (1) The latter course was adopted in 1915, when a battalion was ordered to carry out stamping exercises to help prevent trench-foot. The men reacted angrily, but their officers exercised tact and turned the order into a joke, thus securing 'the fulfilment of the orders without much ill humour'. (2)

Some officers took this style of tactful, consultative leadership a stage further. On taking command of 12/Middlesex in 1916 Lt.Col. Frank Maxwell anticipated the leadership style of Montgomery in 1942. Maxwell had all the men of the battalion gather around informally, and gave them a 'pep' talk, spicing his remarks with a number of jokes. His words were matched by his deeds, for he arbitrarily abolished Field Punishment No.1 in his battalion. Maxwell firmly believed that men should be treated as 'a human being with intelligence'; too many officers, he believed did not have the knack of engaging the men's interest when giving orders.(3) Not all officers went as far as Maxwell or Barnett-Barker of 22/RF, but many learned tact and a few basic man-management

(1) Thomas, pp.115-117. See also E.L.G. Griffith-Williams, KRS Q.

(2) Mosley, p.66.

(3) [C. Maxwell, (ed.)] Frank Maxwell, Brig.-General VC CSI DSO, A Memoir and Some Letters (London, 1921) pp.139, 140, 172.

techniques.

The extent of such leadership by negotiation should not be exaggerated. Pte. J. Cuthbert (9/Cheshires), executed in 1916 for disobeying an order to go into No Man's Land with a wiring party, was the victim of an attempt at negotiation which went disastrously wrong.(1) The scale of such activities, and the circumstances under which they took place must await further detailed research. However, the very existence of leadership by negotiation is an important corrective to the idea the other ranks were blindly obedient cannon-fodder. British officers learned that in dealing with citizen soldiers, the application of 'Regular' methods did not always produce the most effective results.

9.6 The Survival of Auxiliary Discipline on Active Service

The continued existence of auxiliary styles of officer-man relations and discipline on active service depended on the survival of personnel to pass on the traditions and spirit of the original unit to replacements, or on receiving replacement officers sympathetic to the original ethos. Under the Left Out Of Battle (LOOB) system, which was introduced on 1st July 1916 (some units may have adopted it earlier) ten per cent or so of personnel were held back from action to form a cadre on which a unit could be rebuilt. (2) An officer of RDF argued that the LOOB system was important 'in preserving the tradition and experience so essential after heavy losses...'(3) The LOOB system helped to offset both the effects of the mass casualties of the Somme offensive and the cross-posting of drafts which also seems to have begun in July 1916. This

(1) Putkowski and Sykes, pp.83-4.

(2) Letter, nd, G.W. Shepperd, CAB 45/137, PRO.

(3) Letter, 29 Mar. 1930, W.F. Jeffries, CAB 45/135, PRO.

unpopular system resulted in, for example, LRB men arriving at the London Scottish and vice versa. (1) Occasionally, it seems that transfers of men between battalions were arranged, but in general they were prohibited.(2) The integrity of many units was dealt a further blow with the wave of amalgamations and disbandments in February 1918. The angry reaction of all ranks of 11/Argylls when it was announced that they were to be absorbed by 1/8 Argylls was typical of many men facing the disappearance of their unit: 'It will completely destroy the esprit de battalion of a good mob'.(3)

The nature of a unit's disciplinary regime could be judged by whether soldiers were forced to attempt parade ground levels of smartness on active service. Attitudes to 'spit and polish' could vary greatly between units of similar types. Sgt. L. Davidson, a sapper, on moving from one Regular division to another, found that much more emphasis was placed on smartness in the 8th than in the 2nd Division. (4) Cleaning and polishing was usually left to rest periods, although it was not unknown in the trenches. Such activities were resented by many soldiers, because they ate into the little time available for relaxation, and were seen as essentially pointless: in one war novel written by a former temporary officer, it is implied that a unit's combat performance was actually enhanced by disregarding bull.(5) New Army and TF units tended to be

(1) Unpublished account by F.H. Wallis, CAB 45/132, PRO. For an official explanation of this policy, see N. Macready, Annals of an Active Life (London, nd) I, pp.255-57.

(2) Letter, nd, P. Alder, BBC/GW, IWM. See also K.W. Mitchinson, 'The Reconstitution of 169 Brigade: July - October 1916', ST No.29 (Summer 1990) pp.8-11.

(3) Diary, 15 May 1918, R.L. Mackay papers, P.374, IWM. See also J.P.W. Jamie, The 177th Brigade 1914-18 (Leicester, 1931) p.34; Dunham, pp.121-3.

(4) L. Davidson, interview.

(5) Bartlett, No Man's Land p.165; F.A.J. Taylor, The Bottom of the Barrel (London, 1978) p.99.; French, Gone for a Soldier p.32; B. Newman, The Cavalry Went Through (London, 1930) pp.25, 35.

more likely to forego bull in the trenches than Regular units, but this rule was not infallible. (1)

9.7 Territorial Discipline on Active Service

In most cases, direct recruiting into the TF came to an end after 11 December 1915. Thereafter, men enlisted for general service. TF battalions thus began to receive drafts of men without any experience of the Territorial ethos, although the occasional draft of men might 'fortuitously strengthen the territorial element'; (2) thus in 1918 1/5 DLI received a draft of 'splendid material' from the yeomanry.(3) More typical was the experience of 1/7 Middlesex. Continuity with the prewar unit was sufficiently strong for the companies to be referred to by territorial titles: A Company was known as 'Hampstead and Highgate' and B as 'Enfield', until heavy casualties in September 1916 brought about 'practically the end of the original 7th Middlesex'. (4)

The impact of heavy casualties on a cohesive unit was discussed by an officer of 1/6 W. Yorks. This unit, whose prewar disciplinary code was discussed in chapter 2, was 'from April to December 1915...a self-conscious Territorial unit'. Pre-war experience had produced a cohesive unit with excellent esprit de corps and officer-man relations, but it was a 'closed corporation'. Reinforcements were regarded as 'interlopers' and 'ragged unmercifully, or, worse still, left severely alone'. However, the fighting in 1916 'smashed up a good deal of this "Territorial" influence'. Large numbers of original men

(1) H. Colbourne, W. Gilbert, L. Davidson, interviews; Marks, pp.69-70; Coppard, p.29.

(2) Beckett, 'Territorial Force', p.137, 147.

(3) Letter, A.B. Hill, nd (c. 1935) CAB 45/114, PRO.

(4) Unpublished account, in letter, 24 Mar. 1935, E.J. King, CAB 45/135, PRO.

and officers became casualties, and their replacements came from all over the country: 'what was narrow and "local" in the Battalion died out in the "blood bath" on the Somme'. (1) Heavy casualties could bring about the destruction of a community which predated the war, a point graphically illustrated by the grief of an NCO of 1/5 Buffs after their first major action had cost the battalion 250 casualties. (2) Similarly, an officer of 1/4 R. Berks. remarked that during the Somme campaign the nature of the battalion underwent a profound change. However, those original members who were wounded but later returned to the unit were able to restore some of the Territorial spirit of the early part of the war. (3)

The replacement of Territorial officers by more experienced Regulars was bound to cause problems, even if the 'basic wisdom' of such postings was accepted by TF units. (4) When such Regular officers made no attempt to understand the ethos of the Territorial unit, considerable bitterness could result. (5) By contrast, Lt.Col. R.N. O'Connor, a Regular appointed to command 2/HAC in May 1917, was surprised by its 'auxiliary' style of discipline, but in reshaping the battalion (which had recently taken heavy casualties) managed to tighten discipline without transforming the ethos of the unit. Initially, a junior NCO of the battalion admitted, the introduction of some Regular ways was resented, but in the long term they were 'a very good thing for morale and discipline'. Significantly, some Territorial ways remained. The CSM of C company, 'Gee' Grose, 'did his best to make life endurable for [the men]' and 'never shouted an order except when on parade. Off parade he ASKED you to do

(1) Tempest, pp.280-81.

(2) 'Mesopotamian Diary: With the 5th Buffs along the Tigris 1915-1916, Part Two', GW 1, No.4, (Aug. 1989) p.152.

(3) Unpublished account, G.H.W. Cruttwell papers, DERR Museum.

(4) Jamie, p.18.

(5) Keeson, p.219.

something and if it was a lousy job invariably did so with his arm across one's shoulder'.(1)

It seems that the peculiar disciplinary code of TF units was steadily eroded on active service. An officer of 1/20 Londons recalled that early in the war discipline was based on a 'spirit of comradeship and pride', founded on a common 'volunteer' spirit and local feeling, most soldiers and officers being drawn from the same area of south-east London. Inevitably, in time the local character became diluted, and the battalion atmosphere 'changed and depreciated'.(2)

However, the prewar ethos survived for a considerable period in a number of units. W.H.A. Groom, a ranker of 1/5 Londons (LRB), recalled that in October 1916 the officers and other ranks were still largely drawn from the same class and discipline was based on 'good understanding and esprit de corps'. A 'definite change' in the disciplinary system did not occur until April 1918, when 'orthodox army discipline' was introduced, because of the influx of men who lacked experience in the ways of the battalion.(3) However, Aubrey Smith, another ranker, placed the modification of discipline much earlier, in the autumn of 1916, although he gave similar reasons for the change.(4) Even so, Pte. S. Amatt, who arrived at 1/5 Londons in the second half of 1916, noticed a considerable difference between the disciplinary regime of his old unit, 2/7 Essex, and his new one, where less emphasis was placed on 'bull', and there was a 'matey, chummy' relationship between officers and men.⁽⁵⁾ Discrepancies between the different pieces of evidence are probably explained by the fact that Smith

(1) Unpublished account, p.13-14, 32, W.J. Bradley papers, LULLC; J. Baynes, The Forgotten Victor (London, 1989) pp.21-22.

(2) G.H. Cole, KRS Q. For similar comments about 1/4 Gordons, see N.C.S. Down, KRS Q.

(3) W.H.A. Groom, Poor Bloody Infantry (New Malden, 1983 edn.) pp.45,160.

(4) Smith, Four Years p.157.

(5) Quoted in Mitchinson, p.10.

had come out with the battalion in 1914 and thus would have known the unalloyed auxiliary discipline of a class corps, while Groom and Amatt sampled a modified, but still 'un-Regular', version.

Other TF units, largely because of the chance survival of key personnel, also retained the Territorial ethos. 1/7 Manchesters (discussed in its prewar form in chapter 2) which was fortunate to be commanded by one of its prewar officers, falls into this category, as does 4/5 BW.(1) 47th (London) Division's historian claimed that it remained 'to the end what it was from the beginning - a division of London Territorials' retaining 'homogeneity' and 'Civic patriotism'. This is probably an exaggeration but the many Territorial officers who commanded battalions and brigades, and the Division's Regular officers who had experience of the prewar TF, undoubtedly assisted it to maintain its ethos. (2)

Yeomanry regiments were particularly tenacious in clinging to their traditions and character. This was symbolised by the adoption of a broken spur as the sign of 74th Division, which was formed from dismounted yeomanry units. As late as June 1916 an officer joined the Royal Gloucestershire Hussars in Egypt to find that 'The regiment was essentially a landlord and tenant affair...a Farmer could lose his son and his landlord in the same battle',(3) while on joining 25/RWF, which was formed from yeomanry units, an officer found 'an entirely different atmosphere' from any other unit he had served in.(4) A party of New Zealanders arrived at the 1/1 Lincs. Yeomanry, fearing they would be subjected to the 'repressive discipline' of the British army. An officer 'told them something

(1) G.B. Hurst, introduction to S.J. Wilson, The Seventh Manchesters (Manchester, 1920] pp.XI-XIII; Andrews, Haunting Years pp.270, 286-88.

(2) Maude, p.211.

(3) Wilson, Palestine 1917 p.42.

(4) V. de Sola Pinto, 'My First War', in Panichas, p.79. For factors in the survival of the yeomanry ethos of another unit, see E.W. Gladstone, The Shropshire Yeomanry (Manchester, 1953) pp.216, 233.

about the Yeomanry and told them that in the case of difficulties, they must come straight to me'. This regiment was converted to a battalion of the MGC in April 1918, but the peculiar yeomanry ethos survived, thanks to a sympathetic commanding officer: 'he understood and was happy with Yeomen'. (1)

Some Regulars had initial doubts about the paternalism of TF officers. A Regular officer of 51st (Highland) Division argued that during the early period of training paternalism had not yet become second-nature:

They had not been taught to carry the rifles of the footsore...They did not yet know that the welfare of their command must always be their first consideration. (2)

On active service, most Territorial officers seem to have matched the paternalism of the Regulars, even in the early months of the war: the CO of 1/6 Londons, for example, attempted to get extra sugar for his sweet-toothed soldiery in May 1915. (3) There are, however, some examples of poor management in TF units. Pte. Gibbons wrote that the officers of his London TF unit tended to go to their billets at the end of a march, leaving the men to the care of an NCO. (4) Similarly, Pte. Tilsley, who served in a TF battalion of Lancashire Fusiliers in 55th Division complained about poor officer-man relations in his unit - although he did praise one officer.(5)

The differences that existed between individual units, and the problems of generalisation, are demonstrated by the belief of an officer of another TF unit of the Lancashire Fusiliers, 1/5th, who asserted:

that an officer should look after his men, see to their billets and food before anything else. Treat them on Parade with correct discipline and off

(1) Unpublished account, pp.3-4, J.W. Wintringham papers, 78/9/1, IWM. This incident is dated as 1916, but seems to be a mistake for 1918.

(2) W.N. Nicholson, Behind The Lines (London, 1939) p.48.

(3) 'Note by Lt. Col. J.W. Simpson' May 1915, in WD of 1/6 Londons, WO 95/2729, PRO. For the paternalistic attitudes of another officer of this unit, see H.D. Meyers, KRS Q.

(4) Gibbons, p.71.

(5) Tilsley, pp.202, 249.

Parade as human beings. Above all, one had to be fair. If one had to dish out punishment and it was fair, there was no ill feeling.(1)

9.8 New Army Discipline on Active Service

Many of the points made above about Territorial units are also applicable to the New Armies, although unlike first line TF units, Service battalions lacked a longstanding tradition of informal discipline, and were perhaps more vulnerable to Regular discipline creeping in.

The 22/RF's enlightened disciplinary system survived until the battalion's disbandment in February 1918. Barnett-Barker took the 22/RF to France in November 1915 as its commander, and was succeeded in late 1917 by Maj. W.J.T.P. Phythian-Adams, who had joined the battalion as a temporary subaltern in 1914. Maj. C.R. Stone, who had joined the unit early in 1915, became second-in-command. Barnett-Barker expressed his fears as to what would have happened if the command of the 22/RF should fall to an outsider, who, he implied, would not have understood the ethos and peculiarities of the unit. A hard core of original rankers also seems to have remained with the 22/RF. (2) By contrast, the discipline of another Pals unit, 11/Welsh (Cardiff City) became more 'Regular' following the arrival of a new colonel in November 1915. This event seems to have ended the use of auxiliary-style discipline in this unit.(3) One private complained in late 1916 that 'discipline is getting harder to stick every day'.(4)

Keith Grieves' research into the Southdown battalions (11, 12 and 13/R.Sussex) raised by Claude Lowther MP in 1914 suggests that these units had 'a greater

(1) G. Horridge, KRS Q.

(2) Sheffield, 'Effect of War Service', pp.64-66.

(3) Diary, 18, 21, 26, 27 Nov. 1915, W.A. Rogers papers, 87/62/1, IWM.

(4) W. Ireland, The Story of Stokey Lewis VC (Haverford West, nd) pp.30, 54.

sense of independent will and resistance to ill-considered military procedures' than was normal in the Regular army. The distinctive character of the battalions was diluted by non-Sussex drafts which arrived from September 1916 onwards, and the tradition of looser discipline probably declined as a consequence. However, it is noteworthy that 11/R. Sussex enjoyed a measure of continuity of command, which had obvious implications for the survival of the Pals ethos of the battalion.(1)

The extent to which a surviving cadre of rankers and commanders committed to a non-Regular ethos could preserve auxiliary discipline is illustrated by a formation akin to a Kitchener division, 63rd (Royal Naval) Division. The RND clung to its distinct naval identity, which helped to create and nurture a high level of esprit de corps and inter-rank solidarity.(2) It also had a non-Regular approach to discipline, placing, for example, little emphasis on parade-ground drill. Three crucial factors in the survival of the RND's unique ideology may be mentioned. Firstly, throughout the war, with one brief exception, the division's commanders fought tenaciously to retain its naval character against military attempts to make it conform to army ways. Secondly, large numbers of men were promoted from the 'Lower Deck' to become officers in the RND, ensuring that a substantial proportion of the officer corps would consist of men schooled in the peculiar ethos of the formation. Thirdly, the return of RND veterans to the Division as reinforcements was all important. As an RND officer commented, 'A division filled up day by day with strange reinforcements would in a week have lost its identity'. (3)

(1) K. Grieves, '"Lowther's Lambs": Rural Paternalism and Voluntary Recruitment in the First World War', Rural History 4, No.1, (1993) pp. 65, 67, 69; communications with author.

(2) W.S. Churchill, introduction to D. Jerrold, The Royal Naval Division (London, nd) pp.xiv-xv.

(3) Jerrold, pp.185-88, 208-9, 311, 322-23.

A Kitchener unit which suffered this fate was 16/R.Scots (2nd Edinburgh Pals). It sustained heavy casualties and by the end of 1916, in the assessment of R.W.F. Johnstone, a temporary ranker-officer, 'the coinage was becoming debased as few of the original volunteers remained and as the experienced personnel became casualties'. A draft of men with less than three months service arrived in November 1917, along with men who had formerly served with the ASC and cavalry: 'They were disgruntled and unwilling, in the main, to acquire the regimental spirit which must be fostered if personnel are to become good infantrymen'. Generalising from his experience with 16/R. Scots, Johnstone, who also served with Regular and TF battalions, claimed that in 1917 Kitchener units lacked the 'regimental pride' of the military professional. (1)

Clearly, this judgement is too sweeping. Many units, 10/Lincolns for one, maintained their identity to the end of the war.(2) On being posted in October 1918 to 13/RF, a Kitchener battalion, an officer was surprised and pleased to find that 'something of the old friendly spirit' had survived despite the turnover of personnel.(3) Maj. R.S. Cockburn, a ranker-officer, gave an important insight into ^{the} evolution of discipline in 10/KRRC. He argued that the battalion's discipline was founded on comradeship and 'mutual support' of officers and men, who both recognised the need 'to carry on the best we could'. Early in the war 10/KRRC 'made a pretence' of abiding by Regular discipline, while in reality such standards could not be achieved: 'we had not the time, nor had we the NCOs'. However, a belief that the battalion 'as a body' was 'more intelligent' than prewar recruits 'militated against a desire to be ruled entirely by the rod'. Therefore the 'ideal' was recognised, even if 'Regular'

(1) Unpublished account, p.88, R.W.F. Johnstone papers, 82/38/1, IWM.

(2) Bryant, pp.23, 29-30, 182-83.

(3) Parker, Into Battle p.93. He mistakenly states that 13/RF was a TF unit.

disciplinary methods were not always employed, but

Even the ideal itself faded into the very far distance at a later stage, when any satisfactory sort of discipline became difficult; when, that is, we were given untrained drafts to replace casualties. (1)

The CO of 8/E. Surreys, Lt.Col. A.P.B. Irwin, believed that replacements that arrived in late 1917 were distinctly inferior in quality to the volunteers of 1914. However, to his great surprise, these 'huge drafts', which included conscripts, 'all became 8th East Surreys in no time at all'. This survival of esprit de corps owed much to the continuity of command (Irwin had been the adjutant in 1914). Officers and NCOs made a practice of briefing new drafts on the regimental history of the East Surreys, and the past glories of the battalion. Finally, as Irwin himself said, the fighting reputation of the battalion (and indeed the 18th Division as a whole) inspired strong loyalty to the unit. (2)

As the example of 12/Manchesters, bled dry on the Somme but revitalised by the appointment of an inspirational CO, Lt. Col. Magnay, demonstrates, battalion spirit could be rekindled, given the right commanding officer. (3) Likewise, the usual process whereby informal discipline was replaced by Regular discipline could be reversed, as in the case of 17/RF (4) and 6/RSF. Winston Churchill, who commanded the latter in 1916, was a 'fire-eating', aggressive commander, who in some respects attempted to introduce Regular methods into the battalion by drilling the men, improving their appearance and providing 'more style & polish'. (5) However, he also modified the disciplinary code of

(1) Unpublished account pp.24-25, R.S. Cockburn papers, 78/4/1, IWM.

(2) A.P.B. Irwin, Oral History Interview, 000211/04, IWM; regimental history lecture in WD, 8/E. Surreys, WO 95/2050, PRO.

(3) Nicholson, p.152.

(4) Unpublished account, S.V.P. Weston papers, LULLC; Sheffield, 'Effect of War Service' pp.53-54.

(5) Unpublished account, p.16, C.E.L. Lyne papers, 80/14/1, IWM; letter, 17 Jan. 1916, W.S. Churchill, in M. Gilbert (ed.) Winston S. Churchill Companion Vol.III, Part 2, p.1377.

the battalion, most obviously by reducing 'punishment both in quantity, & method'.(1) What has not been grasped by previous writers (2) is that Churchill, despite his service as a Regular officer, applied to 6/RSF the style of discipline he had known in the Yeomanry. This was very different from that imposed by 6/RSF's previous (Regular) CO, and the unit's temporary officers, schooled in Regular ways, initially reacted with hostility to Churchill's innovations. There is also some evidence that the paternal role of the officer had been neglected, since Churchill took pains to organise sports and concerts for the men, who appreciated their colonel's efforts on their behalf. (3)

9.9 Discipline in Regular Units on Active Service.

A recent study of the casualties sustained by one Regular unit, 2/Yorks, in 1914-15 concluded that the prewar Regular army 'had virtually ceased to exist after some fifteen months of fighting'.(4) For the most part, the replacements received by Regular units were wartime volunteers and conscripts. Yet Regular units were more likely to have retained a distinctive character than their New Army or Territorial counterparts. Rawlinson noted in December 1918 that despite containing only 'a sprinkling of professional soldiers', 1st, 2nd and 4th Divisions clung to 'the traditions of the Regular army', possessing even at that late stage a different character to 46th and 50th (TF) Divisions.(5)

(1) Letter, 14 Jan. 1916, W.S. Churchill, in ibid p.1374; [A.D. Gibb] 'Capt. X', With Winston Churchill at the Front (London, 1924), pp.75-78.

(2) eg M. Gilbert, The Challenge of War: Winston S. Churchill 1914-1916 (London, 1990 edn.) pp.637-38.

(3) Letter, 17 Jan. 1916, W.S. Churchill, in Gilbert, Companion Vol.III, Part 2, p.1377; Gilbert, Challenge Of War p.640. The WD of 6/RSF contains little evidence of sports or baths organised for the men; WO95/1772, PRO.

(4) J.S. Sly, 'The Men of 1914', ST No.35, (Summer 1992) pp.11-13.

(5) F. Maurice, The Life of General Lord Rawlinson of Trent (London, 1928) p.252.

Continuity of command helps to explain the survival of a distinctive Regular ethos. Regular officers tended to be appointed to command Regular units, which also seem to have received many, if not most, of the wartime products of Sandhurst. In addition, temporary officers posted to Regular units generally quickly absorbed the ethos of their regiment.(1) Surviving prewar Regular and Special Reservist rankers would also pass on the traditions of the unit. Writing of early 1915, Cpl. John Lucy (2/R.I. Rif.), horrified by new NCOs calling privates by their Christian names, stated that the Regular army 'was finished', but went on to say that 'We remnants' clung together in a 'form of freemasonry', which 'preserved and passed on the diluted esprit de corps of our regiment'.(2) Much the same process seems to have occurred in 1/R. Scots. When R.W.F. Johnstone joined this unit as an NCO in December 1915, that is, after it had served for eleven bloody months on the Western Front, he found that the Regular ethos was very much alive. He felt that 'life was easier and more agreeable in the rather different atmosphere' of his previous unit, 1/9 R. Scots (TF); in the Regular battalion discipline was stricter and 'everything was done in the regimental way'. Johnstone felt that 'the professionalism of the Regular Army even in 1918 was definitely evident to everyone despite its serious losses in officers and men'.(3)

This is not to say that discipline in all wartime Regular units remained as strict as it had been before the war. Both prewar officers and NCOs of 2/RWF believed that standards had declined on active service.(4) On joining 2/R. Berks. from its sister Regular battalion in 1915, Capt. Hanbury-Sparrow was perturbed to find the second battalion's combat performance had suffered

(1) J. Greenshields, KRS Q.

(2) Lucy, pp. 293-94.

(3) Unpublished account, R.W.F. Johnstone papers, pp. 41, 51, 105-06.

(4) Dunn, pp.46, 64; Richards, Old Soldiers Never Die p.315.

because, he felt, 'strength-giving discipline' had been rejected in favour of 'easy-going' discipline.(1) Several sources suggest that a closer relationship began to develop between Regular soldiers and officers in the first months of fighting in France. (2) The example of one Regular battalion, 2/W.Yorks, suggests that this could have a modifying effect on discipline.

Sydney Rogerson, a temporary officer, published a book in 1930 which described life in 2/W. Yorks. in late 1916. Liddell Hart described it as the most accurate recreation of the 'normal atmosphere of a Battalion' that he had read. Rogerson felt that it was ridiculous to try to enforce 'the conventional formalities of discipline' while in the trenches. Indeed, he believed that the best way for an officer to motivate his men was to 'treat them as friends'. This entailed 'a relaxation of pre-war codes of behaviour', but without allowing familiarity. (3)

There are several points worthy of note about this passage. Firstly, Rogerson's attitudes were something of a halfway-house between those of a prewar Regular officer and those of TF and New Army officers, some of whom clearly did allow what Rogerson would have considered to be 'familiarity'. Secondly, the battalion was commanded by a Regular officer, Lt. Col. J.L. Jack of the Cameronians, who clearly did not share the radical views of a Philip Howell or a Barnett-Barker. Nonetheless, Jack quietly modified the Regular discipline of 2/W. Yorks. In periods of bad weather, for instance, he relaxed his rule that men should shave daily. (4) Jack had the typical Regular officer's paternal concern for his men and it appears that he came to

(1) Hanbury-Sparrow, Land-Locked Lake pp.147, 150. See also A.A. Hanbury-Sparrow, 'Discipline or Enthusiasm?', BAR, No.20 (1965) pp.8-13.

(2) Unpublished account, p.9, L.A. Hawes papers, IWM; J. Charteris, At GHQ (London, 1931) p.41; T. Carew, Wipers (London, 1972) p.220.

(3) S. Rogerson, Twelve Days (London, 1930) pp.86-88.

(4) Terraine, General Jack's Diary p.186.

believe that a slight modification of discipline contributed to the well-being of the ranks.(1) Clearly, Rogerson learned his approach to officer-man relations from his colonel, whom he greatly admired. Jack, wrote one of his subalterns, exuded an air of 'dignity and control', winning the 'respect' of the men by his courage and by occasionally 'lifting the barrier of rank' and engaging in 'personal man-to-man encouragement', without ever courting 'familiarity'. (2)

As ever, generalisations about officer-man relations and discipline are difficult. One conscript private of 2/Worcesters bluntly described the notions of 'the comradeship between officers and men in the front line', and that 'an officer always looks after his men' as 'legend[s]'. (3) By contrast, a middle-class ranker in another regular unit, 1/Gloucesters, resented discipline and bull but singled out one of his officers as 'a nice fellow'.(4) Discipline was modified in many Regular units during the war. An officer of 3/Gren. Gds. recalled, in words reminiscent of Rogerson's, that 'the ultra-strict and sometimes too impersonal enforcement of discipline' was 'gradually modified' and a more informal and friendlier relationship evolved. However, 'the essentials of discipline were very much retained'.(5) Changes in discipline were not so drastic as to bring Regular units to resemble prewar auxiliary regiments; yet changes there were.

It has been argued that:

By 1917 the distinctions between what had been regular, territorial or New Army units had blurred or disappeared. Although many soldiers clung to their distinctive identity, for all intents and purposes the British soldier on the Western Front had become a "National Serviceman".(6)

(1) Rogerson, pp.97-98.

(2) M. McConville, quoted in Terraine, General Jack's Diary p.186.

(3) Taylor, Bottom of the Barrel pp.81, 107.

(4) Marks, p.41.

(5) G.F.R. Hirst, KRS Q.

(6) K. Simpson, 'The British Soldier on the Western Front', in Liddle, Home Fires p.144.

As a generalisation, this view has much to recommend it, although there were numerous exceptions to the rule. It does seem that unless a cadre of 'original' soldiers and officers survived to pass on the traditions of a unit, or a sympathetic outsider was appointed to command it, a Regular style of discipline tended to replace auxiliary discipline in New Army and Territorial units. However, as argued in earlier chapters, this did not affect the relationship of the officer and his men - indeed, it may even have enhanced it, as junior officers sought to protect their men from the excesses of the disciplinary system.

9.10 A Contrast: Officer-Man Relations in the French Army, 1914-18

It is useful to place the British army's officer-man relations and discipline into context by examining the experience of the French army. French army discipline of the Great War has gained a reputation for savagery in the Anglo-Saxon world, although the traditional view has been considerably modified by recent research. However, as David Englander has pointed out, soldiers' dissatisfaction with discipline was a factor in the growth of 'tension' between French officers and their men.(1) This factor was compounded by the French officer's lack of paternalism. Unlike the British army, the French army was not renowned for its provision of baths, canteens, sports and other amenities for its troops. Officers of the French army 'did not, by tradition or by custom picked up in the service', share the British concept of noblesse oblige and

(1) A. Horne, The Price of Glory (Harmondsworth, 1964 edn.) p.72; L.V. Smith, 'The Disciplinary Dilemma of French Military Justice, September 1914-April 1917: The Case of 5e Division d'Infanterie', J. Mil. Hist. 55, No.1 (1991) pp.47-68; Englander, 'French Soldier' p.54.

the primacy of the welfare of the men.(1) This was despite, or possibly as a consequence of, the fact that some fifty per cent of officers in the prewar French army were former NCOs. Unlike the British ranker, the poilu did not receive, in exchange for deference, his officer's paternal care. Regimental officers could be admired for their bravery in action, but as David Englander comments, it was their 'humanity', not their courage, that was called into question. (2)

These problems had their roots in the prewar period, when, for a variety of social and political reasons the French army was beset by indiscipline, and the authority of officers and NCOs was undermined. Douglas Porch has argued that the officer's role increasingly became one of administration rather than leadership, not least because to concentrate on administration was to avoid the difficult job of commanding indisciplined troops. Inevitably, officers and men became more and more distant. This situation was exacerbated by the heavy casualties sustained by the Regular officer corps in the opening months of the war. (3) While in Britain, the French officer-man relationship continued to be portrayed in terms of friendship and paternalism,(4) in reality the replacement officers had even less idea of translating the ritualistic verbal paternalism of calling their men 'mes enfants' into practical concern for their men than

(1) A. Brett-James, 'Some Aspects of British and French Morale on the Western Front, 1914-1918', p.7, unpublished paper given at RMA Sandhurst, Nov. 1978; D. Porch 'The French Army in the First World War', in Millett and Murray, p.200. For examples of failures of paternalism, see M. Bloch, Memoirs of War 1914-15 (London, 1980) pp.161-62.

(2) Englander, 'French Soldier' pp.55, 59. See S. Audoin-Rouzeau, Men At War 1914-1918 (Oxford, 1992) pp.57-59, 63 for a rather rosier view of French officer-man relations.

(3) D. Porch, The March to the Marne (Cambridge, 1981) pp.131-32; Porch, 'The French Army' p.222-23.

(4) 'Ex-Trooper', The French Army From Within (London, 1914) pp.27-28; The Times 8 Apr. 1916.

their Regular predecessors.(1)

Poor inter-rank relations played an important part in the mutinies of the spring of 1917. In a report of June 1917 postal censors noted that middle-aged rankers resented being treated in a cavalier fashion by officers who were little more than boys, while confidential reports of 15 and 21 July emphasised the importance of the officers' attitudes, noting the damage done by officers who were contemptuous of, or haughty towards their men. By contrast, friendly, paternal officers were liked. (2) Pétain certainly realised the importance of restoring confidence between leaders and led. On 19 May Pétain issued orders which attempted to correct faults in the officer corps, including a lack of paternalism, and followed this up by visiting units, where he would give practical demonstrations of paternalism by ordering improvements in food and checking on leave rosters.(3) By the summer of 1917, official reports were indicating that French officers were changing their attitudes to the ranks, and this change was appreciated by the men.(4) By September, the immediate crisis was over.

While it is not suggested that poor officer-man relations were solely responsible for the mutinies of 1917, they did play a significant role. The French experience throws into stark relief the importance of the paternalistic ethos of the British officer corps in maintaining morale, and the successful way in which this ethos was passed on to temporary officers. The loss of large numbers of Regular officers in 1914-15 did not bring about the end of paternalism in the British army.

(1) C. Dawbarn, Joffre and his Army (London, 1916) pp.98-99; Brett-James, p.7.

(2) G. Pedroncini, Les Mutineries de 1917 (Paris, 1967) pp.246, 250.

(3) P. Pétain, 'A Crisis of Morale in the French Nation at War, 16 April-23 October 1917', (15 May 1926) in E. Spears, Two Men Who Saved France (London, 1966) pp.99-100, 104-107.

(4) Pedroncini, p.250.

9.11 Australian and Canadian Officer-Man Relations and Discipline

The discipline and inter-rank relations of Canadian and Australian troops also provide useful comparisons with the British army. These forces were for most intents and purposes part of the British army, and many Dominion officers and men were born in Britain. However, Australian and Canadian discipline has traditionally been seen as looser, and officer-man relations more informal, than the British variety. This was supposedly the result of a frontier ethos which ensured that 'colonial' troops were characterised by the dash, elan, and initiative which was allegedly lacking in British units.

C.E.W. Bean's influence on perceptions of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) has been immense, and only in recent years has it begun to be challenged. Bean, the official historian, argued that the AIF was an egalitarian, democratic army, characterised by the 'bush values' of toughness and self-reliance which influenced urban dwellers (who formed the majority of the army) as well as soldiers from rural areas. Bean saw these values, and the quality of the AIF's officers, most of whom were commissioned from the ranks, as vital factors in its military effectiveness. (1) Furthermore, he argued that British 'feudal' discipline and a class-based inter-rank relationship was inappropriate for products of a society which was characterised by democracy and 'mateship'. Therefore, self-discipline and informal officer-man relations prevailed within the AIF. (2)

Clearly, Australian officer-man relations tended to be rather less formal than those of most British units. Cpl. J.F. Edey (5/AIF) long remained a friend

(1) J. Grey, A Military History of Australia (Cambridge, 1990) pp.91-92.

(2) C.E.W. Bean, Official History of Australia in War of 1914-1918 [hereafter Aus. OH] I, (Sydney, 1921) pp.7, 47, 607; C.E.W. Bean, Aus. OH, VI, (Sydney, 1942) p.1085.

of one of his officers. Lt. Frank Corlett would come along the trench to supervise Stand-To:

Frank would grasp me by the PH helmet laying on my chest and... say 'And how's the Western Front this morning, Jimmie?'(1)

In 1916, a private of a British unit was amazed to hear an Australian ranker address an officer as 'Joe' (2) while a British ranker attached to 2nd. Aus. Tunnelling Coy. in 1917 recorded that Australian officer-man relations were too informal for his taste, but 'I never saw an Australian officer lose the respect of his men'.(3)

Bean's views have often been repeated, sometimes in a form simplified almost to the point of parody, (4) for 'Mocking the upper-class Englishness of English officers was part of the [Anzac] tradition, the obverse of its egalitarian element, and so was condescension towards English soldiers'.(5) Part of Bean's purpose in writing was celebrate the 'Digger', the ordinary Australian soldier. Indeed, Bean's reliability as an analytical historian has been challenged, one historian describing him as 'a myth maker, or bard - the Homer of the AIF'.(6) The AIF was indeed raised from a society which was very different from Britain's, and its officer-man relations and discipline reflected this fact. Sir Ian Hamilton was one of a number of Britons who wrote on the differences between British and Australian society, commenting on the unwritten Australian

(1) Unpublished account, J.F. Edey papers, LULLC. For other examples of informal officer-man relations, see L.H. Harris, Signal Venture (Aldershot, 1951) p.21; diary, 4 Aug. 1915, G.B. Edwards papers, LULLC.

(2) Unpublished account, S.B. Abbott papers, 78/36/1, IWM.

(3) Unpublished account, P.R. Hall papers, 87/55/1, IWM.

(4) For example, in Peter Weir's 1981 film Gallipoli. See also P. Firkins, The Australians in Nine Wars (London, 1973 edn.) pp.125-26, 136.

(5) K.S. Inglis, 'Anzac and the Australian Military Tradition', RIHM 72 (1990) p.3.

(6) E.M. Andrews, 'Bean and Bullecourt: Weaknesses and Strengths of the Official History of Australia in the First World War', RIHM, 72, (1990) p.47. See also J. Mordike, 'The Story of Anzac: A New Approach', JAWM, 16, (1990) pp.5-17.

rule that there should be no displays of respect, and arguing that privates did not understand what the officer stood for.(1) However, in reality the AIF was less egalitarian than Bean would have the reader believe.

It was not until January 1915, for example, that it became de rigueur for officers to come from the ranks. In addition, it appears that few officers of the AIF came from 'labouring backgrounds'. (2) Bean himself rather inconsistently admitted that educational and social factors did play a role in the selection of officers, although he was at pains to argue that socially elite officers were no more effective than products of state schools.(3) Several examples may be given to illustrate both sides of the argument. Lt. F.M. Stirling (29/AIF), an Australian public school and 'Varsity man, displayed impeccable sporting and paternal attitudes more normally associated with the product of Eton or Harrow.(4) However, Cpl. W.C. Gamble (25/M.G. Coy, AIF), who served in France in 1917 and 1918, stated that ex-public schoolboys were made officers 'irrespective of whether they had the backbone or ability to lead men'.(5)

In practice, the Australian system of commissioning officers was virtually identical to the British. The major difference was that it was usual for Australian ranker-officers to return to their former units, although Bean exaggerated when he wrote that this policy 'was entirely opposed to the

(1) Report on An Inspection of the Military Forces of the Commonwealth of Australia, by General Sir I. Hamilton (20 May 1914) p.34. See also C.E. Jacomb, God's Own Country (London, 1913) pp.43-44. For a modern view, see B. Kingston, The Oxford History of Australia, III, 1860-1900 (Melbourne, 1988) p.280.

(2) Grey, Military History p.92.

(3) Ibid p.92; C.E.W.Bean, Aus. OH, III, (Sydney, 1929) p.54. For Australian public schools, see Kingston, p.202.

(4) Diary, 12, 22 Sept. 1916, F.M. Stirling papers, LULLC.

(5) Unpublished account, p.58, W.C. Gamble papers, LULLC. See also letter, 1916, T. Gardner, quoted in J. Morice, Six-Bob-A-Day Tourist (Ringwood, Vic., 1985) p.59.

practice in the British Army'. (1) Bean also claimed that 'A beneficial result of the whole system was that the Australian officer was much closer to his men than was his British colleague'. (2) In fact, a close reading of Bean's own text reveals that inter-rank relations in the AIF were in some ways similar to those in the British army. Even on Gallipoli, a 'clear distinction had to be preserved between officers and men', (3) By 1916 a ranker-officer had, for the sake of 'good discipline', to 'break with his old associates'. After a farewell dinner 'their relations were formal'. (4) Although Bean's claim that the 'character and competence' that men demanded of their leaders 'came to be the sole criteria' for the granting of commissions ignores the importance of social factors in this process, (5) it was in essence true enough. However, much the same could have been said of the British army from mid-1915 onwards. Other virtues claimed by Bean for the AIF officer, such as battlefield leadership and paternalism, also characterised the British officer. (6) Like Bean, Sir John Monash, in an influential work, gave a fundamentally misleading comparison of British and Australian officers and inter-rank relations. (7) Finally, it should be noted that the fact that Australian inter-rank relations tended to be less formal than British does not imply that there was any less mutual respect, admiration and affection between the ranks in the BEF than there was in the AIF; each relationship reflected the nature of the home society.

Senior British, and indeed some Australian officers tended to blame AIF

(1) C.E.W. Bean, Aus. OH, III, p.51. In Aus. OH, VI, p.20, Bean repeats then contradicts this statement in the space of a paragraph.

(2) Bean, Aus. OH, VI, p.21. See also Bean, Aus. OH, III, p.125.

(3) Bean, Aus. OH, I, p.530.

(4) Bean, Aus. OH, III, p.52.

(5) Bean, Aus. OH, I, p.530.

(6) Bean, Aus. OH I, p.550, VI, p.21.

(7) J. Monash, The Australian Victories in France in 1918 (Sydney, 1936) pp.265-67.

officers for the indiscipline of their troops.(1) After the war, Monash proudly proclaimed that in the AIF the individuality of the Australian soldier was used as a basis on which to build collective 'battle discipline',(2) implicitly comparing Australian with British discipline, to the disadvantage of the latter. In the words of an AIF ranker, 'Australian discipline does not permit of unthinking obedience to senseless orders...'(3)

Many myths have been built up around Australian discipline. The popular image of the indisciplined Australian is based largely on the 1914-15 period, when the AIF experienced many disciplinary teething troubles. The British New Armies, another citizen force raised at the same time, faced similar, although less acute, disciplinary problems. By the time the AIF reached the Western Front in 1916, its discipline had improved considerably. Moreover, self-discipline, as opposed to 'imposed' discipline, was not a uniquely Australian trait, as this thesis has demonstrated.

Battle-discipline cannot, of course, be treated as entirely separate from more general discipline. While the failure of Australian soldiers to salute officers may be seen as inconsequential, the 1915 riots in the Wasser, Cairo's brothel district, cannot.(4) Moreover, recent research has demonstrated that, pace the postwar writings of Bean and Monash, Australian discipline had a great deal in common with British. Monash's postwar views were somewhat at variance with his wartime ones. Senior Anzac officers saw the tightening of discipline as essential to the maintenance of the reputation of their divisions as the elite 'shock-troops' of the BEF. Thus, although many believe that Australians 'would

(1) Sir A. Murray to Robertson, 18 Mar. 1916, Sir W.R. Robertson papers, Rob I/32/13/1, LHCMA; Birdwood to Murray, 25 Feb. 1916, Sir W.R. Robertson papers, Rob I/32/13/2, LHCMA.

(2) Monash, pp.265-56.

(3) Harris, Signal Venture p.56.

(4) Gammage, pp.38-40; S. Brugger, Australians and Egypt 1914-1919 9 (Carlton, Vic.) 1980 p.145-47.

not stand for' Field Punishment No.1, (1) in reality, 'The Anzacs accepted the standards in force in France and pursued them rigorously' (2), although for reasons of Australian domestic politics, the 121 soldiers sentenced to death were not executed.

Until the publication of Ashley Ekins' major study, any assessment of Australian discipline must remain provisional. However, the view of the Anzac Provost Corps in July 1918 that discipline was 'good', with the few incidents being ascribed to small numbers of 'men of bad character' who 'have done their best to ruin the good name of the AIF' (3) contrasts sharply with the widespread indiscipline of 1915. A private of 59/AIF wrote in 1916 in terms which might have been used by a middle-class ranker in a British unit:

One is practically a prisoner. You have to have lights out at certain hours and cannot talk after lights out. Even going on swimming parade you are marched by an officer or NCO in the strictest manner. I think they begrudge you our brains to think with at times.(4)

Lacking a Bean, the tradition of a Canadian frontier ethos producing informal discipline and officer-man relations is not as well developed, but it nonetheless exists. (5) This school has been attacked by scholarly historians, one arguing that:

[Canadian] battlefield excellence derived not from any innate superiority born of the North American frontier...but primarily from British tutelage and the hard crucible of war.(6)

The myth of Canadian indiscipline is, like its Australian counterpart, rooted

(1) Fuller, Troop Morale p.50.

(2) Pugsley, On the Fringe of Hell pp.101, 131-35. Pugsley has drawn upon Ekins' unpublished work.

(3) Appx. to July 1918, WD, Anzac Provost Corps, WO 154/129, PRO. This report refers to Palestine.

(4) Letter, T. Gardner, 1916, quoted in Morice, p.59.

(5) P. Berton, Vimy (Markham, Ontario, 1987 edn.) pp.49-50.

(6) J.A. English, The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign (New York, 1991) p.308. See also A.M.J. Hyatt, General Sir Arthur Currie (Toronto, 1987) pp.114-15; D. Morton, 'The Canadian Military Experience in the First World War, 1914-18', in R.J.Q. Adams, (ed.) The Great War, 1914-18 (London, 1990) pp.88-89.

in the earliest months of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF)'s existence. The problem of raising a citizen army virtually from scratch was exacerbated by politically appointed officers. (1). During this period the Canadians acquired a reputation for indiscipline (2) but in time, discipline developed, aided by tactful but firm handling by Byng, the British commander of the Canadian Corps in 1916-17.(3) In many cases Canadian units seem to have relied on 'self' rather than 'imposed' discipline, although they were quite capable of insisting on a measure of 'spit and polish' behind the lines even if it had been neglected in the trenches.(4) The British commander of the Canadian Cavalry Brigade concluded that Canadian discipline was informal but good:

the Canadian army was very flexible. It found room for everybody, and managed with great success to put people to their own jobs. But let nobody think that these eccentricities relaxed real discipline. I can truly say that...I never had a rebellious word or look, nor once was an order disobeyed. (5)

It has also been claimed that 'an easiness' existed between Canadian officers and men that was 'foreign' to British forces.(6) Isabella D. Losinger's authoritative work on Canadian officer-man relations throws considerable doubt on the first part of this statement,(7) as does the memoir, based on diaries, of Pte. D. Fraser (31/CEF and 6th Can. Bde. MG Coy.). If specifically Canadian references were removed, Fraser's journal could easily pass for an account by a soldier in a British Service or Territorial battalion.

(1) G.W.L. Nicholson, Canadian Expeditionary Force 1914-1919 (Ottawa, 1962) pp.24-38. For problems in 11/CEF see letters, 4 Nov., 28 Dec. 1914, G.W. Durham papers, IWM.

(2) Letter, 21 Nov. 1914, G.F. Patterson papers, RMAA.

(3) J. Williams, Byng of Vimy (London, 1983) p.131.

(4) For the example of 46/CEF, see J.L. McWilliams and R.J. Steel, The Suicide Battalion (St. Catharines, Ontario, nd) p.49.

(5) J.E.B. Seely, Adventure (London, 1931 edn.) p.236.

(6) Berton, p.161.

(7) I.D. Losinger, 'Officer-Man Relations in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1919', (MA thesis, Carleton University, 1990).

Fraser was an immigrant Scots clerk with no previous military service. Like his contemporaries in the BEF he judged his officers largely by their treatment of the men and their performance as leaders.(1) When he wrote of 'the officers fraternizing with the men' on Christmas Day 1915, the obvious implication was that normally officers did not fraternize with the rankers. However, the CEF often posted ranker-officers back to their old units and this probably enhanced the informality of the relationship. Thus Fraser wrote of one of his officers, a fellow Scot who had served as a private in Fraser's company: '[he] was a great friend of the writer. He confided in me greatly...'. This situation does not seem to have presented any great problems of familiarity.(2)

The ranker who unfavourably compared inter-rank relations in his old unit, 3rd Canadian Division DAC, with those in his current unit, a TMB of the same division, is a salutary reminder of the difficulty of generalising about officer-man relations, which differed from unit to unit, (3) but in one case at least, Canadian indiscipline was linked to poor leadership. A prewar Canadian regular officer, Capt. H.R. Hammond, steeped in the paternalistic ethos of the British Regular army, was not impressed by the officers of 47/CEF, although he judged them to be little worse than officers of other Canadian battalions. He criticised a major for failing to set an example to his men, and the colonel for lacking paternalism and man-management skills, which led to indiscipline: 'It is not really the men's fault', commented Hammond, 'they are like children and have not been handled properly'.(4)

(1) R.H. Roy, (ed.) The Journal of Private Fraser (Victoria, BC, 1985) pp.30-31, 81, 172, 241.

(2) Ibid pp.70, 270. For an example of informal inter-rank relations in Canadian Corps Cyclist Battalion, see letter, Oct. 1916, G.W. Durham papers, IWM.

(3) Letter, 22 Dec. 1917, W.E. Hoad papers, LULLC.

(4) Letters, 27 Nov., 5, 11 Dec. 1915, 2 Feb. 1916 H.R. Hammond papers, LULLC.

One can conclude that Canadian and Australian discipline tended to be looser and officer-man relations a little more informal than was usually the case in many British units, but the differences between 'Imperial' and 'Dominion' troops should not be overstated. The Dominion approach was rather more, and the British rather less, formal than is commonly believed, with the Canadian style perhaps more closely resembling the British than the Australian. Moreover, the idea that enlightened Dominion commanders deliberately tailored the disciplinary system to match the needs of their men, who were imbued with a frontier ethos, is at very least open to question.

9.12 Officer-Man Relations, Morale and Discipline in the Postwar Army

On hearing the news of the Armistice on 11 November 1918 an NCO exclaimed '"Now that the war is over, we can get back to real soldiering"': and 'everyone knew what he meant'. (1) In reality, another four years passed before the British army returned to a pre-1914 pattern of life. 1919-22 marked a period of transition from a mass citizen army to a small Regular colonial gendarmerie. The army, 3.75 million strong at the Armistice, was rapidly demobilised. Most war-raised units were disbanded at a time when Britain had greater military commitments than ever before. (2) The army of this period, consisting of re-enlisted serving soldiers, young volunteers, and men conscripted in the latter part of the war and compulsorily retained until the end of April 1920, was a very different force from the wartime BEF. (3)

(1) Bowra, p.87.

(2) See K. Jeffery, The British army and the Crisis of Empire (Manchester, 1984) passim.

(3) K. Jeffery, 'The post-war army', in Beckett and Simpson, pp.214-15.

The end of the war was followed by a significant change in many soldiers' attitudes to authority and discipline. The demobilisation procedure was widely perceived as being unfair, and perhaps more importantly, many wartime volunteers and conscripts seem to have believed that their 'contract' with the army had expired, for in defeating Germany they had completed the job for which they had enlisted. In the words of one sapper NCO, there was 'a spirit of revolt against the system which had held the individual for so long'. (1) Men who had uncomplainingly accepted military discipline while hostilities were in progress now began to resent it, particularly if the military authorities attempted to impose prewar standards. A 1914 volunteer serving with 2/6 SF in the Rhine Army spoke for many when he wrote: 'Spit & Polish we dont like that after Active Service'. (2)

While the most dramatic manifestations of indiscipline were the large-scale strikes in rear areas and in England, mainly involving lines of communication troops, there were also numerous minor incidents in front line units.(3) A Regular staff officer noted that temporary officers as well as rankers adopted an attitude of 'We'll soldier no more'. (4) Certainly, many temporary officers had considerable sympathy with their men. Alan Thomas of 1/6 RWK recalled a company refusing to parade: 'They could scarcely be blamed. They were still, like most of us, not soldiers but civilians in uniform'.(5) According to a private of 1/Devons, the battalion's officers pragmatically accepted the inevitable and eased discipline. This was one of many units in which this

(1) Unpublished account, p.90, G. Buckeridge papers, IWM.

(2) Letter, 3 May 1919, A.E. Slack papers, IWM.

(3) See A. Rothstein, The Soldiers' Strikes of 1919 (London, 1985 edn.), passim.

(4) Nicholson, pp.294-96.

(5) Thomas, Life Apart p.159. See also unpublished account, p.35, A.S. Benbow papers, PP/MCR/146, IWM.

process occurred. (1) Some officers found that their authority was defied, in a rather half-hearted fashion, by their men (2) but there is no evidence of widespread hostility to regimental officers per se. Indeed, given the nature of the wartime officer-man relations, it would be surprising if there had been. Even Pte. Alf Killick (AOC) a revolutionary socialist involved in the Calais mutiny of January 1919, recalled Capt. Rees, a 'fair man', and mentioned that the mutineers 'felt quite sorry' that the revolutionary struggle should begin while he was in command. (3)

The regimental officer had a vital role in managing the crisis of discipline that followed the armistice. In 1919 the men of 13 Siege Battery RGA were provoked into striking by clumsy attempts to force them to endure 'long hours of tedious and unnecessary drill'. However, as an officer remarked, 'they are still the same men who won the war and if treated in the right way and told the reason for things they are ready to do anything required of them'. (4) Tactful handling by sympathetic officers, who continued in their wartime role of defending their men against capricious authority, and the residual trust of men for their regimental officers, helped the battery to maintain a measure of cohesion. In the same way, a junior officer was able to defuse a strike in an infantry unit (probably 17/W.Yorks.) by adopting a conciliatory role. (5) The role of the regimental officer vis a vis his men had not changed, even if rankers' perceptions of the relationship had. In 1919 W.R. Bion (Tank Corps), imbued with the paternalistic ethos of the junior officer and accustomed to the close

(1) Unpublished account, G.W. Sullivan papers, IWM. See also unpublished account, p.89, G. Buckeridge papers, IWM.

(2) Unpublished account, p.95, J.K. Stanford papers, DS/Misc/75, IWM.

(3) A. Killick, Mutiny! (Brighton, nd) p.6.

(4) Unpublished account, L. Parrington papers, IWM.

(5) Diary, 1 Dec. 1918, E.R. Hepper, PP/MCR/138, IWM.

relationships existing within a combat unit felt himself to be, at 21 years old, 'an antiquity, a survival from a remote past'. (1)

Three specific cases of postwar indiscipline suggest that good officer-man relations were as important in the army of 1918-22 as they had been in the BEF. Robertson, the commander of the Rhine Army in 1919, believed that a major factor in the unsatisfactory morale and discipline of this formation was that officers and men, serving in what amounted to 'new units', were to a large extent 'utter strangers to each other'. (2) Referring specifically to two cases of indiscipline, Robertson denounced officers who were 'out of touch with their men' and who had shown 'lack of consideration and efficiency in handling their units and in managing their interior economy'. (3)

Similarly, Maj.Gen. Childs, the Director of Personnel Services, believed that the strike of 3/Coldm. Gds. on 10 June 1919 resulted from an over-zealous training regime inflicted upon soldiers who held a number of not unreasonable grievances, and who were primarily concerned with their imminent demobilisation. (4) By contrast, the mutiny of 1/Connaught Rangers in July 1920 was in large part a politically motivated reaction to the situation in Ireland. However, the two most recent studies of the mutiny, which differ considerably in their interpretations, agree that a subsidiary factor was a failure of leadership on the part of the officers of the battalion. (5)

The indiscipline of the months immediately following the Armistice was not typical of the inter-war period as a whole. Anthony Clayton has pointed out ^{that}

(1) Bion, p.286.

(2) Robertson to WO, 11 May 1919, Robertson papers, Rob I/28/21C, LHCMA; D.G. Williamson, The British in Germany 1918-1930 (Oxford, 1991) pp.32-37.

(3) 'Notes of Conference...', 17 May 1919, Robertson papers, Rob I/28/8b, LHCMA.

(4) Minute by Childs, WO 32/9543, PRO.

(5) A. Babington, The Devil to Pay (London, 1991) pp.86-88; J. Putkowski, 'The Mutiny of 1st Bn. (sic) Connaught Rangers', lecture delivered at DLI Museum, 28 June 1992.

after the initial turbulence of 1919-20 subsided, the all-volunteer Regular army of the inter-war years experienced only two, minor, outbreaks of indiscipline. Clayton highlights the role of the officer-man relationship in ensuring that 'loyalty to regiment took pride of place in men's minds'.⁽¹⁾

The overall character of the officer class did change a little in the years following the war. The percentage of sons of 'Gentlemen' entering Sandhurst fell from 20.5 per cent in 1910 to 9.1 per cent in 1930. Conversely, the percentage of sons of military professionals rose from 43.8 to 50.8 per cent. Two other groups may have also contributed to this change in social profile. Firstly, wartime officers who converted their temporary commissions into Regular commissions. Secondly, officers of fairly humble origin who graduated from Sandhurst during the war, when the usual fees were waived.⁽²⁾ Against this must be set the surprisingly large number of surviving prewar officers.⁽³⁾

The findings of the 1923 Haldane Committee on officer training and education would appear to show that there was an official wish to institutionalise the rough meritocracy of 1915-18.⁽⁴⁾ It argued that 'In these days it is neither necessary nor desirable' draw officers from 'any one class of the community' and that their proposals with regard to entry to Woolwich and Sandhurst would have the effect of 'democratising' the system of officer recruitment. The reality was rather different. Rather than lowering fees, it was decided to ask county councils to make scholarships tenable at the two officer training establishments as well as universities. This was not a policy likely radically

(1) A. Clayton, The British Empire as a Superpower (Athens, Georgia, 1986) pp.510-11.

(2) Simpson, 'The Officers', p.91; T.A. Heathcote, The Military in British India, 1600-1947 (forthcoming).

(3) Beckett, 'The British Army' p.114.

(4) Report of Committee on the Education and Training of Officers, p.3, WO 32/4353, PRO.

to alter the social profile of the officer class. Moreover, the recommendation that the Territorials, should, as in 1914-15, be utilised as a source of officers prompted the comment that

it is essential to review the exact conditions under which commissions were formerly given. Otherwise the door might prove inconveniently wide.(1)

Between 1922 and 1930 some 189 rankers received commissions under the Y Cadet scheme, which was supposed to ensure that 13.5 per cent of the officer corps was composed of ex-rankers, but a large proportion joined the unfashionable RASC. This threatened to create a social chasm with the rest of the army, and led to the halting of direct recruitment of officers into this corps. In the mid-1930s, Sandhurst intakes consisted of only about 5 per cent of ex-rankers.

(2) In sum, although the social profile of the average British officer changed a little, the meritocratic officer corps of 1915-18 quietly died in the 1920s.

The ethos of the officer class of the interwar period, with its emphasis on sport, social life, horses and the regimental family, was very similar to that of the prewar period. As before, the average ranker was poorly educated, of a low medical standard, and possibly drawn from the unemployed, and his life style would have been instantly recognisable to his predecessor.(3) Not surprisingly, the officer-man relationship in the Regular army of the early 1920s was also very similar to that of twenty years before. Spike Mays, who enlisted as a trooper in the Royal Dragoons in this period, was not uncritical of military life, but he nonetheless wrote that officers

(1) 'Precis for Army Council No.1152', pp.23, WO 32/4353, PRO.

(2) G.F. Spillan, 'Manpower Problems in the British Army 1918-1939: The Balancing of Resources and Commitments' (D. Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1985) pp.125-26.

(3) B. Bond, British Military Policy Between the Two World Wars (Oxford, 1980) pp.62-70, 143, 145; S. Mays, Fall Out the Officers (London, 1969) pp.4-5, 60, 66, 152-53.

always inspired confidence and respect in their men... There was a deep division of status between commissioned and non-commissioned, which did not interfere with the good relationship between officers and men, and the Other Ranks in no way resented the money and splendour of their seniors. On the contrary, they admired them for it because it gave them a bit of cavalry dash and importance. There was friendship as well as discipline, and both were sure and certain. (1)

The evidence of rankers who served in other units in the early 1920s confirms that this picture of officer-man relations was not unique to the Royal Dragoons.

(2) There were popular and unpopular officers: Bdr. H.L. Horsfield, who enlisted in the Royal Artillery in 1920, recorded the general dislike of an unpopular commanding officer, but his admiration for one of the majors.(3) Officers testified to the importance of paternalism, although some believed that postwar rankers showed less automatic deference, the inter-rank relationship relying more on the professionalism and character of the officer. (4)

The character and ethos of the postwar Territorial Army (as the TF was renamed one year after its reconstitution in 1920) also had much continuity with the prewar period. (5) TA officers seem to have been of broadly middle-class origin, with many professional men taking commissions. As before, yeomanry officers tended to be of a higher social class. The expense incurred by officers ensured that there was a constant shortage of officers and this fact would seem to preclude working-class men from becoming officers, although paradoxically service as a TA officer was popular with university students, who welcomed

(1) Ibid, p.92.

(2) S. Finch (E. Yorks), 000943/03; L.P. Gaines (Dorsets) 000874/09; T.M. Stevens (RGA), 000776/07, Oral History Interviews, IWM.

(3) H.L. Horsfield, 000874/09, Oral History Interview, IWM.

(4) J. Prendergast, Prender's Progress (London, 1979) p.42; J.G. Halstead, KRS Q.

(5) P. Dennis, The Territorial Army 1907-1940 (Woodbridge, 1987) pp.154-5; I.F.W. Beckett, The Amateur Military Tradition 1558-1945 (Manchester, 1991) p.249; B. Peacock, KRS Q.

the modest stipend. Territorial rankers also seem to have been mainly drawn from the working class, including the unemployed.(1)

A wartime officer of 1/5 York and Lancs. believed that informal, friendly officer-man relations remained 'the great asset' of the postwar Territorials. (2) As late as 1938 a book on the TA devoted several pages to comparing the informal discipline of Territorial units with the more formal approach of the Regulars. It claimed that, impressive as the 'mutual understanding and camaraderie' that existed between the Regular officer and soldier was, officer-man relations in a TA unit were 'far deeper and more intimate'.(3) The reasons given for the peculiar nature of discipline in the TA - 'the class of men concerned, the spirit which animates them, and the leadership which knows how to handle them and make use of that spirit' - (4) are very reminiscent of descriptions of pre-1914 auxiliary forces. An officer who had served with the 1/4 Gordons believed that the atmosphere of the postwar 4/Gordons was even more democratic and egalitarian than it had been before the war.(5) Given the drawbacks of service in the TA of the interwar years - official indifference, hostility in some circles, inadequate rewards - the 'club' spirit was probably more essential than ever. (6)

(1) Dennis, pp.161, 164.

(2) C.D. Fox, KRS Q.

(3) G.R. Codrington, The Territorial Army (London, 1938) p.68.

(4) Ibid, p.66.

(5) R.W.F. Johnson, KRS Q.

(6) Dennis, p.181.

Conclusion

This thesis has argued that officer-man relations were generally good in the British army of the 1902-22 period. The relationship was a reciprocal one: deference was given in exchange for paternalism. The relationship had its roots in the nature of British society, and can in retrospect^{ba} be seen as a source both of strength and of weakness.

The morale of the British army of 1914-18 remained essentially sound throughout the war. The ethos of the prewar officer corps, which stressed the need for the officer to exercise paternal care for his men, was a major factor in the maintenance of wartime morale. This code of paternalism was passed on to wartime temporary officers, many of whom came from outside the traditional officer-providing classes, via a highly successful system of officer training and education, reinforced by the operation within the army of what I have termed a 'bureaucracy of paternalism'. Thus the lower middle-class and even working-class officers of 1918 were as paternal as their public school educated predecessors of 1914. The fate of the French army in 1917 illustrates the problems of morale which can befall an army which lacks an officer corps imbued with the paternal ethos.

Paradoxically, good officer-man relations were accompanied in many units by harsh discipline. There were two disciplinary traditions represented in the wartime army; the 'Regular' tradition, and that of the auxiliary forces, which was somewhat looser and was characterised by a greater reliance on self-discipline. However, Regular discipline tended to dominate in a majority of units as the war went on. Regimental officers helped to protect their men from some of the excesses of the disciplinary system. Also, as the army appeared to many rankers, particularly wartime volunteers and conscripts, as a vast, arbitrary coercive machine, sympathetic and paternal regimental officers helped

to offset the impression that ordinary soldiers were helpless and friendless in the face of an all-powerful authority. Good officer-man relations in some cases enhanced the combat effectiveness of units. An important side effect of good officer-man relations was that they helped to create a British 'war generation', which united ex-soldiers of all ranks.

It is also important to note the limitations of good officer-man relations. They could not prevent some cases of 'rough justice'. Nor could good officer-man relations do more than limit the damage of the widespread indiscipline in the army after the armistice. It is also the case that good officer-man relations in a unit do not necessarily lead to combat effectiveness. If officers identify too closely with their men, this can lead to a reluctance to take aggressive action and thus put them at risk. It might be added that there is little evidence to suggest that the regimental officers of 21st and 24th Divisions were any less paternal than those of any other New Army formation. Yet failure of battlefield leadership by these officers was one reason, among many, for the poor performance of these divisions at Loos in September 1915.

The most important weakness of the officer-man relationship in the British army was that it created a culture of dependency which reduced the scope for independent thought or initiative among the lower ranks because men relied so heavily on their officers, although this tendency can be exaggerated. In addition, it was not always appropriate to apply the paternal/deferential relationship and rigid discipline to educated middle-class men who served in the ranks. While the inter-rank relationship and discipline were sometimes modified at unit level, the best use was not always made of intelligent rankers. However, this factor should be weighed against the relative ease with which men could pass from the ranks to a commission.

When one comes to draw up a balance sheet, the advantages of the officer-man relationship greatly outweighed the disadvantages. Above all, the role of the officer-man relationship in sustaining the morale of BEF through four years of gruelling attritional fighting on the Western Front was of vital, although hitherto neglected, importance.

Appendix 1: British Army Conscripts

50.3 per cent of all wartime enlistments occurred after the introduction of a form of conscription in January 1916. However, no attempt has been made to discuss relations between officers and conscripts per se, although the experiences of individual conscripts have been examined. The problems involved in such a study are considerable, largely because relatively few soldiers who wrote memoirs, or left diaries or letters, admitted to the stigma of conscription.(1) The only full-length study of British army conscripts gives an interesting overview of conscripts' experience of military life, but its usefulness for this study is unfortunately limited.(2)

Furthermore, conscripts had widely differing experiences. Men were conscripted into every arm, and served in Regular, Territorial and New Army units, which had varying approaches to discipline and officer-man relations. The conscripts themselves were of widely differing social backgrounds, with, as noted above, a disproportionate number being drawn from middle-class, white collar occupations. Their attitudes towards enlistment varied greatly. Some men had attested under the Derby scheme, a 'half-way house' between voluntarism and conscription. Some men had deliberately avoided enlisting during the voluntary phase of recruiting in 1914 and 1915. Others were, for various reasons, unable to volunteer, and welcomed conscription. Some men, who probably would have volunteered, only reached the age of enlistment after conscription had come into force.(3) Given these variables, it would be just as meaningless an exercise to treat 'the conscripts' as a discrete group as would be to treat 'the volunteers', who had

(1) I.F.W. Beckett, 'The Real Unknown Army: British Conscripts 1916-19', GW 2, No.1 (Nov. 1989) p.4.

(2) I.R. Bet-El, 'Experience into Identity: The Writings of British Conscript Soldiers, 1916-18' (Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1991)

(3) Beckett, 'Real Unknown Army' p.8.

many different motives for enlisting,(1) in the same fashion.

Some general remarks about conscripts are not out of place. The discipline, motivation and military effectiveness of conscripted soldiers were often denigrated both by officers and by rankers who volunteered for military service.(2) Thus the commander of 19th Division lamented that the replacements that arrived after the end of the Somme campaign in 1916 'lacked the cheerful eager look of the volunteer. We never had the same gallant adventurers in the ranks again'. (3) To be set against this subjective view is the fact that, whatever the facial expressions of its soldiers, 19th Division advanced eighteen miles over difficult terrain in the last week of the war, taking 'fairly severe' casualties in the process.(4) Judged by the yardstick of military success, 19th Division's conscripts were effective soldiers. The same was true of the men of 9/DLI who were praised by their commander for their performance in an action in September 1918:

[They] showed the highest form of discipline while under the enemy barrage, never flinching although caught like rats in a trap. The conduct of the men was worthy of the highest traditions of the British Army.(5)

In 1918, as in 1916, some units were more effective than others, and a host of reasons determined military effectiveness. Leadership, morale, training and tactical skill were among the most important. Dominick Graham has suggested that in 1917-18 new men 'blended with surviving natural leaders to keep the show going'.(6) The survival of distinctive traditions and ethos in some units supports this contention. The method by which the majority of soldiers in a unit joined the army did not, in itself, affect combat performance.

(1) Simkins, Kitchener's Army pp.165-75.

(2) Beckett, 'Real Unknown Army' pp.4-5.

(3) T. Bridges, Alarms and Excursions (London, 1938) p.162.

(4) Anon, A Short History of the 19th (Western) Division (1914-1918) (London, 1919) p.108.

(5) Letter, 22 Aug. 1933, E.G. Crouch, CAB 45/126, PRO.

(6) S. Bidwell and D. Graham, Fire-Power (London, 1982) p.117.

It has been said that in the conscript army of World War Two British recruits were prepared to accept the demands of military life if they experienced 'Competent, understanding leadership and a well-run and pride-filled unit'.(1) Much the same might be said of the conscripts joining the army in 1916-18, and indeed of the volunteers of 1914-16. Conscripts of the Great War seem to have differed little in their attitudes from comparable volunteers. The attitudes of two conscripts, Alfred M. Hale, a 41-year-old artist and composer who loathed army life, and E.C. Barraclough, an 18-year-old who approached his military service with enthusiasm and excitement, are paralleled by those of volunteer soldiers.(2)

In conclusion, then, it can tentatively be suggested that the conscript's attitudes and assumptions mirrored those of other soldiers of his age, social class, and civilian and military experience. In this respect, the method by which a man joined the army was relatively unimportant.

(1) D. Fraser, And We Shall Shock Them (London, 1988 edn.) p.104.

(2) P. Fussell, (ed.) The Ordeal of Alfred M. Hale (London, 1975), passim; unpublished account, p.1, E.C. Barraclough papers, 86/86/1, IWM; Simkins, Kitchener's Army pp.206-208.

Appendix 2: Discipline and Continuity in Small Units

Trench Mortar Batteries, Royal Engineer Field Companies, Machine Gun Companies and similar units were relatively small, perhaps one hundred men strong, and were commanded by fairly junior officers such as captains or even subalterns. Units such as TMBs were often used as dumping grounds for officers and men who were not wanted by infantry units.(1) Paradoxically, members of such units tended to regard themselves as an elite, as 'craftsmen' who had a skilled task to perform, unlike the 'general purpose' infantry. It is not surprising that officers and men who regarded each other as part of an elite team should develop a working relationship which set aside the niceties of military etiquette.(2) Officers and men also shared a common identity as 'outsiders', who were disliked by the infantry. This antagonism arose partly because of their privileged, independent status, but also because TMBs were likely to disturb the 'live and let live' system and draw fire upon the infantry, and the sappers often required working parties to be furnished by the infantry.(3)

Away from the supervision of more senior, perhaps regular, officers, commanders of small units often operated informal disciplinary systems. Lt. P.G.G. Heath transferred from 8/E. Surreys to 55th TMB in 1916, and enjoyed an excellent relationship with his men: 'their discipline according to Army standards was deplorable...But I preferred it that way...'. He argued that in a TMB there was more scope for initiative, and many unorthodox soldiers and officers thrown out of infantry battalions revelled in the atmosphere of a

(1) Letter, 13 Apr. 1934, officer of 8/KRRC with illegible signature, CAB 45/133, PRO.

(2) Latham, pp.49, 51.

(3) Ashworth, pp.163-68; L. Davidson, interview.

TMB.(1) A junior officer of 1/17 Londons volunteered for duty with a TMB in part to escape 'from "bull" and spit and polish'. He enjoyed the responsibility, which was far greater than that of a platoon commander in a battalion, and the 'free and easy' life. He reduced fatigues 'to a minimum', and was able to give his men all sorts of privileges. As a ranker-officer, he was well aware of the private's point of view.(2) While not every small unit operated a system of relaxed discipline (3) it is clear that many did.

Falling between the TMB and the infantry battalion in size and disciplinary style was the field artillery battery. Something of a 'craft union' attitude emerged among gunners of all ranks. One former ranker argued that good officer-man relations in artillery batteries stemmed from the need to co-operate as part of a team. (4) The pattern of casualties that an artillery battery could expect to sustain also helped to maintain continuity of command and personnel. R.C. Foot, an officer of 62nd Divisional artillery, calculated that in 22 months of action the unit had a casualty rate of 250 per cent for officers and 100 per cent for rankers. There was a mitigating factor. These losses were sustained in a 'steady drain' over the period. By contrast, it was not uncommon for infantry battalions to take losses that crippled it 'in an hour of battle'. 62nd Division was a Territorial division originally recruited in Yorkshire. Although individual replacements came from all over Britain, non-Yorkshire soldiers

assumed a Yorkshire defiant and stubborn quality that characterised the 62nd division from its earliest days, and were proud of it. D/310 Battery, never with more than twenty Yorkshire born men, had by now become Yorkshire to

(1) Unpublished account, pp.92-93, 161-62, P.G. Heath papers, DS/Misc/60, IWM.

(2) Unpublished account, p.20, H.D. Paviere papers, IWM. For the relaxed atmosphere of 99 MG Coy., see Sheffield, 'Effect of War Service' p.66-67.

(3) P.G. Ackrell, My Life in the Machine Gun Corps (Ilfracombe, 1966) p.24; A. Russell, With the Machine Gun Corps (London, nd) p.166.

(4) A.J. Cummings, 'Books and Plays of the Great War', Twenty Years After supp. vol., p.10.

the core.(1)

This survival of traditions owed much to the steady, rather than rapid, rate of loss experienced by this battery. There always remained a hard core of officers and men to pass traditions on to new drafts.

(1) Unpublished account, pp.89, 121-22, R.C. Foot papers, IWM.

Appendix 3: Published Guides to Officership

A large number of articles and books on the nature of officership appeared during the Great War. Their influence is difficult to gauge. Many were widely distributed, (1) some being used by instructors at OCBs. (2) Given the conscientiousness that most temporary officers displayed in their duties, it is reasonable to assume that such guides were in fact read by their intended audience.

The advice offered by guides to officership rarely varied. Officially-sponsored and unofficial guides alike preached much the same message, although the latter generally had a rather more humorous approach. 'The Duties of an Officer', one of the most widely acclaimed works, is an example of the cross-fertilization of unofficial and official advice. This pamphlet had its origin in an address given by a 'Senior Officer' to a tactical school for young officers. A version was published in The Times in April 1916, and then, 'in response to many requests', it was published as a pamphlet. It was eventually issued as official Army pamphlet SS 415. (3)

These guides assumed that officers could be drawn from outside the traditional officer-providing classes, providing they were taught leadership skills. This marked a significant break with prewar practice and beliefs (see chapter 5). As the author of one pamphlet, based on his wartime experiences in 1914-18 wrote:

many hold that...[leadership] is an inherited quality which descends naturally

(1) The Times 14 Nov. 1916; A.H. Trappman, Straight Tips for 'Subs' (London, May 1915 edn.) p.4.

(2) Blunderbus 2, p.60; 'Regular', Customs of the Army. A Guide for Cadets and Young Officers (London, 1917) p.3.

(3) Anon, 'The Duties of an Officer', The Times 1 April 1916; Ibid 4, 10, 11 April 1916. See 'General Aspects: Duties of an Officer' file, LULLC, for copies of the pamphlets.

on the elect, who are called upon to officer our army. I think this is a profound mistake and that history bears me out in this view.(1)

'CNW' had a somewhat less radical view, but his fears that temporary officers would behave as jacks-in-office were less significant than his acceptance that officers could be drawn from non-traditional sources.(2) Works such as Customs of the Army started from the premise that its readers would have the disadvantage of lacking the basic social skills learned by prewar Regular officers at home and at public school.(3)

The advice offered by these guides closely followed the teaching of officer training units. The need for the subaltern to win the respect of his men was often stressed. This was seen as the foundation of military success: 'Without this respect men will not show that confidence in an officer which will enable him to exact instant obedience to orders and to maintain the strictest discipline'. (4)

How was the officer to gain respect? The short answer was 'character', defined in 'The Duties of an Officer' as 'resolution, self-confidence, self-sacrifice'. It was judged to be essential 'to inspire your men by your example, sustain their courage in danger by your example, and their endurance in hardship by your example'. (5) Whereas harsh officers were hated by their men, one expert opined, incompetent officers were despised.(6) In peace, it is conceivable that an inefficient officer could rely on his institutional position alone. On

(1) 'Basilisk', Talks on Leadership Addressed to Young Officers (London, 1941 edn.) p.1.

(2) 'CNW', 'An Open Letter to the Very Young Officer', JRUSI LXIII, No.445, (1917) pp. pp.69-70.

(3) 'Regular', pp.17-18; [T.D. Pilcher], A General's Letters to his Son on Obtaining His Commission (London, 1917) p.9.

(4) B.C. Lake, Knowledge for War - Every Officer's Handbook for the Front (London, nd,) p.18. See also 'Esterel', 'To the Junior Subaltern', JRA XLIII (1916-17) p. p.231; Notes for Young Officers (HMSO, 1917) p.3.

(5) The Times 1 Apr.1916. See also Sir H. Uniacke, unpaginated forward to 'Basilisk'.

(6) Trapmann, pp.49-50.

active service, this was no longer possible.

Guides to officership also emphasised the need for an officer to be exemplary in his personal conduct.(1) Most importantly, the platoon officer was urged to develop a relationship with his men which struck a balance between paternal care and discipline. To develop paternal care, the officer was advised to get to know his men; it was essential to remember that 'the soldiers under you are individual human beings and not sheep or cattle; they have their individual feelings, tempers and temperaments'. (2)

The officer's knowledge of his men had to extend to an understanding of their prejudices and thought-processes. (3) Above all, the subaltern was encouraged to cultivate a literally paternal relationship. He had to be a kindly but firm father to his men, not a 'dry-nurse'(4): 'we are all comrades...make the men feel that you realise this relationship and love it.'(5)

These works attempted to give the reader a practical as well as a theoretical guide to leadership. Readers were warned of various 'old soldier' dodges, and the conditions under which it might be appropriate to disobey an order were discussed.(6) An important theme in many guides is the practical limitations of a subaltern's power: 'Never give an order which you cannot enforce. It is better to cancel an order than to allow it to be disregarded'.(7) A delicate balance had to be maintained between tact and discipline. Officers should avoid familiarity, and 'slackness, disobedience, slovenliness' had to be punished.(8) Popularity grew from respect; officers should not attempt to seek popularity, or

(1) Notes for Young Officers p.3; 'Esterel', pp.232-33; The Times 1 Apr. 1916.

(2) Trapmann, pp.48-49. See also Notes for Young Officers p.3.

(3) Trapmann, p.50; Pilcher, p.24.

(4) 'Basilisk', p.56.

(5) The Times 1 Apr.1916.

(6) Notes for Young Officers p.5.

(7) Pilcher, p.56. See also 'Esterel', p.231.

(8) 'Regular', p.10.

conversely, to be afraid to court unpopularity in the course of improving efficiency.(1)

Curiously, little attention was devoted to relationships between officers and NCOs. 'The Duties of An Officer' does not discuss the topic. Pilcher devoted some paragraphs to NCOs, but did not discuss the crucial question of how a junior officer could rely on an experienced NCO for advice without sacrificing the authority of the officer.(2)

By contrast, advice on the welfare of the soldier was plentiful. Notes for Young Officers stated, unequivocally, that 'the care of his men must take precedence of every consideration of [the officer's] personal comfort'. It was argued that 'the trials and hardships of a campaign [will be] materially reduced...[and] the goodwill of the men will be gained' as a result of paternal care. An entire section was devoted to 'Relations between officers and men off duty' which stressed that:

An officer must not think that his duties end with the dismissal of his platoon after parade. The life of the average private soldier is a dull one, the class from which he comes has not much time for amusement, and it is his officers who have to teach him to amuse himself in the right way.

This was followed by a list of ways in which the officer might brighten the lives of his soldiers.(3) Very similar advice appeared in other guides.(4)

In conclusion, officially and unofficially produced guides on officership were a response to the widening of the social base of the wartime officer corps. Aimed at officers without a public school education, they reinforced the teachings of officer training units, and were a further means by which such men were inculcated with paternalistic concern for their soldiers.

(1) Trapmann, pp.49-50.

(2) Pilcher, p.57-60.

(3) Notes for Young Officers pp.6-9, 68-70.

(4) eg Pilcher, pp.24-27.

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